INSIDE Teaching

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALASIAN TEACHER REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 1 | APRIL 2010

Top tips for beginning teachers?

DON'T PANIC

THE KEY TO LEARNING

Small teacher-to-student ratios, individualised learning and a stable environment are helping disadvantaged students overcome the barriers they face.

IT'S ABOUT ME IT'S ABOUT US

INDIGENOUS ED

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MY BEST TEACHER

JONATHON WELCH

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INSIDE Teaching

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALASIAN TEACHER REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

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Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *Inside Teaching*, the professional journal of the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA). In keeping with the goal of ATRA to facilitate the cooperative and collaborative work of Australian and New Zealand teacher registration and accreditation authorities, *Inside Teaching* looks at the latest current research findings and addresses the issues facing the profession, with content by educators for educators that has hands-on, practical application, and offers new ideas and promotes reflection on practice. Put simply, *Inside Teaching* is the real deal. We're confident that it will meet your needs – the needs of a highly-qualified, proficient and reputable teaching profession. To make sure of that, we want to hear from you and invite you to contact your state or territory ATRA member with your stories, ideas and feedback.

State of the nation

The newly-established Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has released for public consultation a set of teaching standards that specify the proficiency, skills and knowledge expected of graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teachers in terms of subject content, pedagogy and professional development. It is expected the graduate and proficient levels will be tied to teacher registration or accreditation, while the highly accomplished and lead teacher levels will be voluntary.

While the registration or accreditation of teachers remains a state or territory responsibility, Commonwealth, state and territory governments, through the Council of Australian Governments national partnership agreement on improving teacher quality, agreed in January 2009 to create a system of national accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, national consistency in teacher registration and national consistency in the accreditation or certification of accomplished and leading teachers.

Public consultation on the draft standards through state and territory authorities, or the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, closes on 21 May.

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In Queensland, the Department of Education and Training's $1.1 billion dollar public-private partnership (PPP) with the Aspire School consortium is well underway. The Aspire Schools consortium will design, build and maintain six new primary schools and one new high school. The new PPP schools include Bay View State School in Thornlands South and Peregian Springs State School, which opened this year, and Bellbird Park, Collingwood Park, East Coomera Downs and Bundilla State Schools as well as a new high school at Murrumba Downs, due for completion in 2011 or 2012.

In Western Australia, according to Education Minister Liz Constable, a new era in public education has begun. Referring to the state's 34 new independent public schools, the Minister revealed that independent public schools principals have more autonomy, particularly in terms of recruitment. The WA Education Minister called for expressions of interest from schools keen to join the next intake of independent public schools, which close on 27 April.

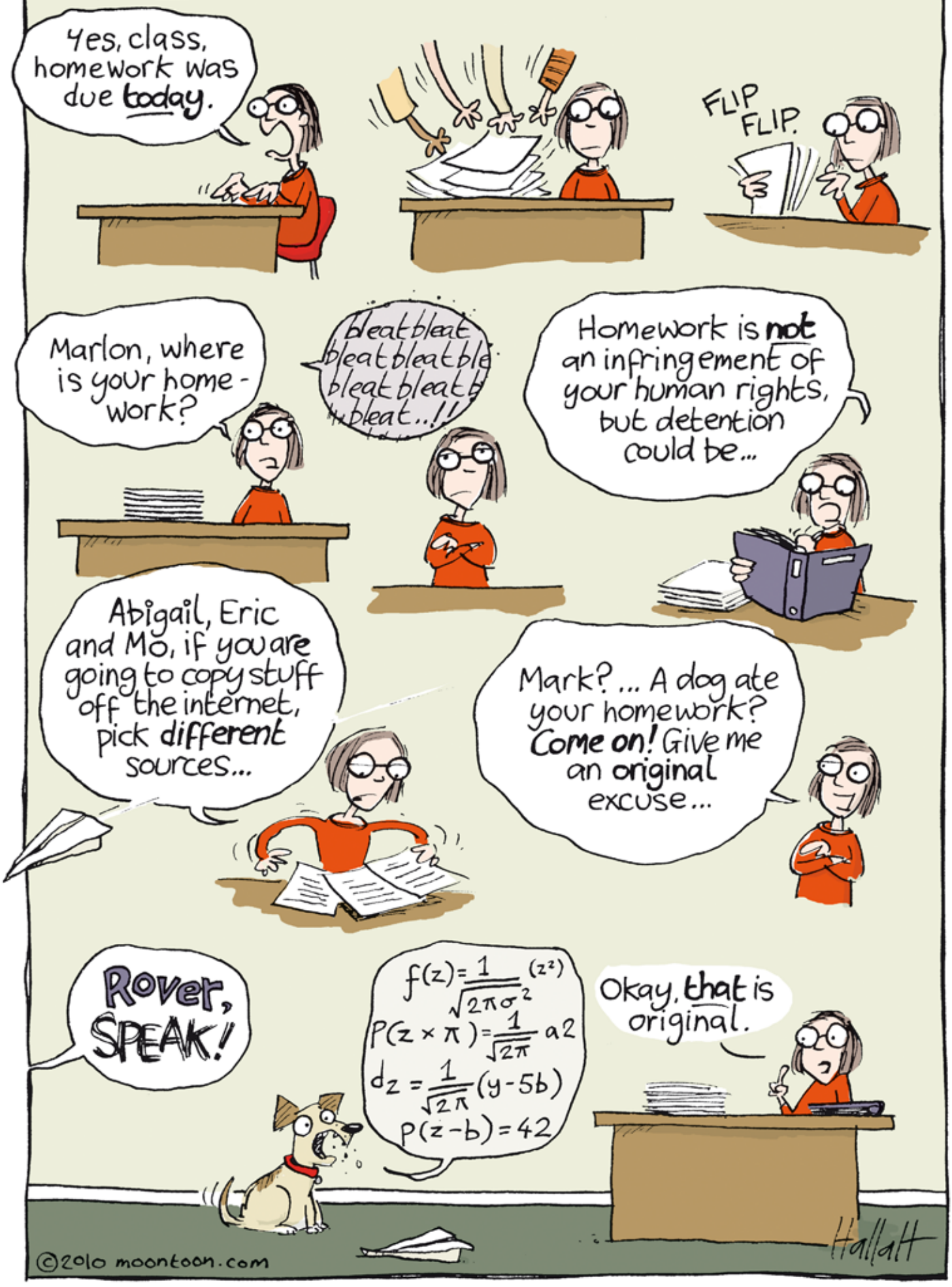
In election mode in South Australia, Opposition Leader Isobel Redmond and her shadow Education Minister David Pisoni announced a similar policy to develop a less-centralised education system, and promised to phase in 'expanded local governance for those school communities desiring it,' beginning with a trial in 30 schools in 2011.

Also in election mode in Tasmania, Labor leader David Bartlett went to the polls with his controversial Tasmania Tomorrow restructure of Years 11 and 12 which involves replacing secondary colleges with a two-stream system of vocationally-oriented polytechnics and university-oriented academies for youngsters aiming for university entry. Liberal leader Will Hodgman promised he would scrap the two-stream system, returning to a business-as-usual model of secondary colleges, while maintaining vocational education and training courses in secondary colleges in line with the current Tasmania Tomorrow model. Hodgman also promised to make 'public education fee again' – or should that have been free again? The Greens 11th hour support for Labor means that the Tasmania Tomorrow program is probably safe – if the Labor-Green government hangs together.

In Victoria, the Government School Performance Summary was launched quietly by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority last June, garnering much less attention than the My School website of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority launched in January.

Behind the lines

by Alex Hallatt



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Measuring school performance

National literacy and numeracy assessment and now the new My School website raise a key question: how is a school's performance best measured? ***GEOFF MASTERS*** *offers an answer.*

The launch of the My School website and the public reporting of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results have invited questions about how schools are 'performing.' There are two broad methods you can use to measure a school's performance – direct and indirect measures. Direct measures of performance are based on observations and judgements of the quality of what is happening in a school. Indirect measures are based on measures of student performance. While both have their uses, I argue that the attempt to draw inferences about a school's performance from student test scores alone is inherently problematic. Indirect measures need to be supplemented by more direct performance measures.

Indirect measures

Because the ultimate purpose of schooling is to improve outcomes for students, it may seem obvious that the best basis for measuring a school's performance would be measures of student performance, but there are several reasons why this may not be so.

First, reliable measures of student performance exist for a very limited set of outcomes. Literacy and numeracy tests measure only part of what students learn in school and so only partially capture the contributions that schools are making.

Second, student performances reflect a range of influences unrelated to a school's performance. Socioeconomic backgrounds are an obvious example. So are pre-existing learning difficulties, low attendance rates and high levels of student mobility. Many influences on student test scores are largely beyond the control of schools.

Third, student performances can reflect the circumstances of the school in ways that are unrelated to the efforts of current staff. Limited school facilities and resources, high rates of staff turnover and low levels of community engagement and support often are more a function of a school's location, history and financial circumstances than its current performance.

In some parts of the world, attempts have been made to construct indirect measures of school performance from measures of student performance. This is done by first predicting the test performances of students in each school based on their socioeconomic background and other factors. The difference between the predicted and actual scores in a school is then taken as a measure of that school's 'contextualised value-added' performance. The better students do than predicted, the higher the school's measured performance.

There are several well-recognised problems with this approach. First, it can obscure actual student results. Second, it sets lower expectations of some students than others. A school in a low socioeconomic area can be judged to be performing as well as expected, even if students' levels of literacy and numeracy are unacceptable by anybody's standard. Third, this approach assumes that the difference between predicted and actual student results is due only to the influence of the school. As British statistician Harvey Goldstein puts it, parents relying on measures of this kind to select schools for their children are using a tool not fit for purpose.

An alternative, and preferable, approach to measuring the value that a school adds is to measure student growth across the years of school. For example, average growth in reading between Year 3 and Year 5 is likely to be a better indicator of the contribution a school is making than reading results for a single year level. Rates of growth can, however, also reflect influences beyond the control of schools, including non-attendance, high rates of student mobility and learning difficulties.

Direct measures

In contrast, direct measures of school performance are based on what a school is currently doing. The focus is on establishing the extent to which the school is pursuing strategies that are known from research to lead to better student outcomes.

Direct measures require direct observations of the school and its work,

meetings with relevant stakeholders and a review of available documentation and student work. They inevitably involve professional judgements, usually made by trained assessors with extensive experience in schools.

An example of such a process is the teaching and learning audit currently underway in all government schools in Queensland. Beginning with a review of international research into highly effective schools and their characteristics, an approach has been developed that assesses eight aspects of each school's practice. For each aspect, a judgement is made using a four-point scale: low, medium, high and outstanding. Each level on the scale is described in some detail for each of the eight aspects, and experienced principals work with schools in the audit process. Briefly, the audit addresses those eight aspects by asking the following questions.

1. An explicit improvement agenda

To what extent has the school leadership team established, and to what extent is it driving, a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice, and couched in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy? Have explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement been set and communicated, with accompanying timelines?

2. Analysis and discussion of data

To what extent does the school place a high priority on the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes? Do data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement or regression over time; performances in comparison with other schools; and, in the case of data from tests such as NAPLAN, measures of growth across the years of school?

3. A culture that promotes learning

To what extent is the school driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning? Does the school give a high priority to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents? Is there a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders? Does the school work to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive, and that promotes intellectual rigour?

4. The targeted use of school resources

To what extent does the school apply its resources – staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials and so on – in a targeted manner to meet the learning needs of all students? Are there school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs? Are there flexible structures and processes that enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners?

5. An expert teaching team

To what extent is the school focused on building a professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom? Are there procedures in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements?

6. Systematic curriculum delivery

To what extent does the school have a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and that provides a clear reference for monitoring learning across year levels? Has the plan been developed and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice? Is the plan shared with parents and caregivers?

7. Differentiated classroom learning

To what extent do teachers, in their day-to-day teaching, place a high priority on identifying and addressing the learning needs of individual students? To what extent do they closely monitor the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need?

8. Effective teaching practices

To what extent do the school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly-effective teaching practices are the key to improving student learning throughout the school? Do they take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully? Do all teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning?

The primary purpose of the Queensland teaching and learning audit is not to report publicly on the performances of schools, but to work with schools to identify current strengths and areas requiring further attention. Direct school performance measures of this kind are capable of recognising high performance – that is, excellence in implementing recognised best practices – even if those practices are not yet reflected in student test scores. ■

Professor Geoff Masters is Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Educational Research.

The key to learning

Low teacher-to-student ratios, individualised learning and a stable environment are helping disadvantaged students overcome the barriers they face. ***ROSS SMART*** *reports.*

Here's the scene: a Monday in mid-December, a group of nine students stand side by side on a makeshift stage at Key College, an independently-run secondary school with three campuses across Sydney. With a scattering of friends, family and supporters proudly looking on, some with tears in their eyes, each student is presented with their New South Wales School Certificate to mark the completion of their Year 10 studies.

It's a scene repeated at schools all over NSW at the end of each and every school year, but this ceremony in recognition of a major learning milestone for these students at Key College was far from unremarkable. Each of them came from a background of disadvantage, including being housed each night in refuges or other temporary or short-term accommodation, and experienced a range of behavioural and emotional issues.

Key College is run by Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets, a community organisation aimed at helping young people between the ages of 12 and 21 who are facing challenges from homelessness and drug dependency to disconnection from school, neglect and abuse. Youth Off The Streets, as its mission statement puts it, aims to help 'disconnected young people to discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices.'

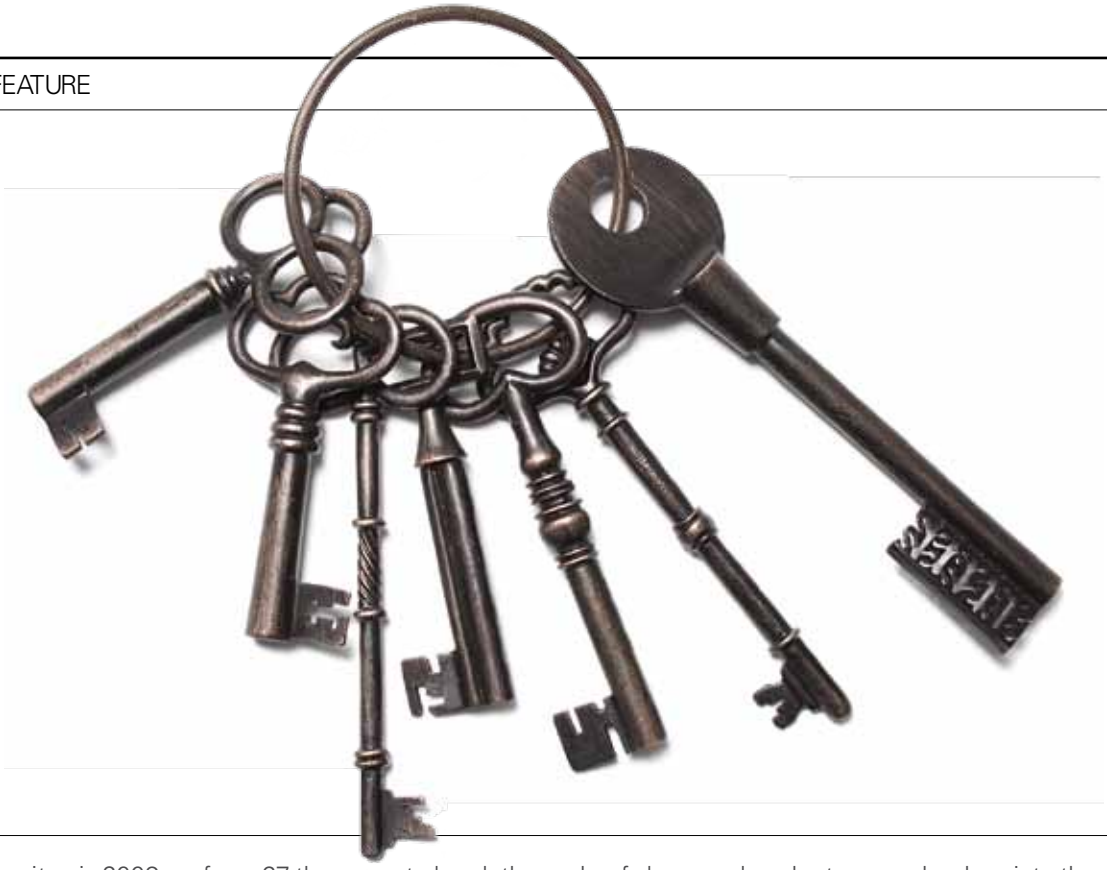
A key part of the strategy lies within Key College's campuses at Merrylands, Macquarie Fields and now at Redfern, the result of moving from the Surry Hills campus for the beginning of this year.

The learning environment at Key College is markedly different from that of a mainstream school. For starters, there's only one classroom, with students of all ages working alongside one another. The students are all equipped with highly individualised and integrated programs, designed to boost literacy and numeracy skills while at the same time taking into account the difficulties that saw them disengage from the mainstream education system to begin with.

Offering education for students in Years 7 through to 12, the flexible curriculum and extensive support programs for life away from education have seen Key College regularly achieve outstanding results since it was founded by Father Riley back in 1997.

In 2009, those nine school certificate recipients from the Surry Hills campus were joined by another 14 from Macquarie Fields and Merrylands, making it a record year for Youth Off The Streets. The 23 students who successfully completed Year 10 represent a significant jump from the year before, when nine students across all three campuses gained their school certificates.

In total, 98 students aged between 13 and 17 years were enrolled across



the three sites in 2009, up from 67 the previous year.

The results in the School Certificate are especially pleasing for Key College Principal Lou Single, given the type of hardship students have faced in their lives and in mainstream education.

'For many of the young people who attend our schools, traditional initiatives and strategies have failed to engage them in learning and provide them with the support they need to realise their right to education,' Single says.

'In our schools, we aim to deliver innovative initiatives and strategies to meet the needs of our students, assist them with overcoming the issues and barriers affecting them, and ultimately turn their lives around.'

The key? 'Being flexible in our approach to the curriculum,' she says, 'as well as providing our students with the support they need to get their lives back on track.'

As one 2009 graduate explains, staff at Key College never stop believing in the students. 'My family once told me I would never make it through school, but they were wrong,' the student says. 'I've risen above my demons because my teachers here encouraged my dreams and ambitions in life. I'm not the only one proud of me; my teachers are proud, my mum and Nan and Pa are proud.'

Research has shown that education is a key factor in empowering young people to break the cycle of abuse and neglect. The main objectives of Key College are to ensure young people are provided with: schooling suitable to their specific needs; the support required to ensure they engage with the opportunities offered to them, particularly in regard to language, literacy and numeracy skills; and the support required to address the issues affecting them.

A 2008 graduate describes the support as amazing. 'It's pretty cool to have support from the staff and students for any problem, to be understood when you try to explain and not just be told off,' the student says. 'The teachers always know how to solve a problem.'

Maintaining small teacher-to-student ratios, averaging between six and eight students to each teacher, and conducting lessons in one main classroom are just two of the strategies Key College uses. Individual education plans assist young people in Years 8 to 10 to develop the skills required to re-enter mainstream education and complete their NSW School Certificate and Higher School Certificate before pursuing employment or further education or training.

Individualised, quality teaching is essential, says Single, but you also need to ensure you have support staff trained to deal with issues such as homelessness and instability of accommodation. 'Our students face multiple and complex issues, which the school assists them to address in order that they can make the most of the educational opportunities offered and turn their lives around,' she explains.

'We have to be innovative in our approach, which is why we've developed and implemented initiatives and strategies to engage young people in learning. This in turn helps to improve literacy and numeracy in a manner that engages the students, makes them feel supported and encourages them to learn.

'Activities such as service learning, which is structured to engage young people in projects designed to help others and stimulate social conscience, enable the whole community to become involved in the work of the school and allow students to improve the community,' she says. 'Service learning also helps to improve the self-esteem of students and allows them to see that they can make a valuable contribution to society.'

Key College students have been involved in a number of service learning activities: 12 students participated in the 'Walking in My Shoes' camp; three students were involved in a before-school reading program; seven cared for retirement village residents on a Blue Mountains day trip; and nine more were involved in creating artwork for playground areas.

In addition to completing work in their communities, Key College students also participate in a wide range of life skills programs. These range from design and

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Teaching Mathematics? Make it count:

What research tells us about effective teaching and learning of mathematics

Research Conference 2010 will focus on mathematics teaching. It will draw together research-based knowledge about effective teaching and learning of mathematics. It will consider approaches to teaching that develop the mathematical proficiency of students and that catch and hold their interest in mathematics from the early years through to post-compulsory education. It will be relevant to those directly involved in mathematics education as well as those concerned more broadly with the place of mathematics in education.

Speakers include:

Professor Paul Ernest
The University of Exeter, UK

Mr Phil Daro
University of California, Berkley, USA

Professor Kaye Stacey
The University of Melbourne, Vic

Professor David Clarke
The University of Melbourne, Vic

Professor Merrilyn Goos
The University of Queensland

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technology workshops run by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) NSW and designing and producing children's books to completing Senior First Aid and courses in boat building and restoration.

Staff members work closely with the NSW Department of Education to encourage a return to mainstream education when appropriate, while extra care is taken to ensure that the emotional and behavioural issues students face in their day-to-day lives are addressed through the provision of a range of fully-integrated and supportive programs.

The Redfern campus provides education and support for students who are homeless or in unstable accommodation. Many students face multiple accommodation moves during the school year. By assisting in placing students in short-, medium- or long-term accommodation, the school provides a stable environment to help them overcome the barriers they face.

As Single observes, students demonstrate noticeable improvements in literacy and numeracy, and benefit from activities that enable them to develop life skills and confidence to enhance their future employability. 'We ensure issues such as harassment, drug and alcohol use, self-image, conflict resolution, puberty, sex education and hygiene are addressed,' she says. 'Good social skills are an important part of the support we provide, as few of our students have been exposed to these within their family. We've developed many activities to assist students with integrating positively into society and to develop life skills.

'This is necessary before learning can begin as many behavioural and emotional issues prevent students from being able to focus on learning.' The idea, she explains, is to help them to achieve the stability necessary for them to engage in learning. Then further work can be done to address the issues affecting them while they gain a formal education.

'We endeavour to ensure that by the time they complete their education, the students have a strong feeling of belonging to a community, possibly for the first time in their lives. We're also committed to ensuring that support continues when the student leaves if necessary.'

Working with Single, as the principal of all three campuses, is a full-time school manager and at least one full-time teacher for each campus, as well as part-time teachers, psychologists, support workers, and intern counsellors. As teacher Min Bonwick says, staff members care deeply for the welfare of the students and work tirelessly to help them achieve positive outcomes. Bonwick isn't alone: the three campuses enjoy a 100 per cent staff retention rate and an absentee rate of just two per cent. 'I love my job here,' Bonwick says. 'Every day is different, with new challenges popping up all the time. It's also a creative role. The kids we deal with are refreshing and amazingly resilient.'

Student attendance rates are also encouraging, with trends showing greater engagement and attendance the longer a student spends at Key College. Of those students who finish any given year, figures show that attendance rates rise significantly in terms three and four.

By tailoring the approach to the needs of each individual student, Key College is achieving positive outcomes one young person at a time. It's a tough, but vital job. ■

Ross Smart *is the communications coordinator for Youth Off The Streets and a freelance journalist.*

Pictured, students from Key College, Sydney. Photos courtesy of Youth Off The Streets.

Key College received the highly commended award in the Excellence by a School and its Community category of the 2009 Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Contact keycollege@youthoffthestreets.com.au

LINKS:
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Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers

aitsl

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The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was established in January this year to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership.

A key priority of the Institute is the development and maintenance of national professional standards for teaching and school leadership. An early and important part of this work is to support the national consultation currently underway on the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers released by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) in March 2010.

This is an exceptional opportunity for members of the teaching profession and the wider education community to help shape the directions of the profession and contribute to improving educational opportunities for Australian students.

What are National Professional Standards for Teachers?

The draft Standards set out what teachers should know and be able to do across the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement at four levels: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher.

Why National Professional Standards for Teachers?

The National Professional Standards for Teachers will provide a continuum of capabilities and expectations for teachers to guide ongoing professional learning and a nationally consistent basis for valid, fair and reliable identification and recognition of the teachers who meet them.

How are the Standards being developed?

The draft Standards were developed through mapping and analysis of research, and of standards in use by teacher registration and accreditation authorities, employers and professional associations in Australia.

During March to May 2010 comment on the draft Standards is invited from members of the teaching profession and the general public. Consultation activities will be conducted within states and territories by education authorities, employers, teacher regulators and professional associations.

The consultation feedback will be taken into account in revising the draft Standards. The revised draft will be then validated to assure the appropriateness and reliability of the Standards in different teaching contexts.

The Standards will be finalised by the Board of AITSL and submitted to MCEECDYA for approval later this year.

How to be involved?

The draft Standards and information on how to provide feedback is available at **www.mceecdya.edu.au**

Submissions close 21 May 2010.

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It's about **me**
It's about **you**

It's time we recognised, understood and valued the diverse and different identities of Indigenous people, if we want to improve Indigenous education, says ***JEANNIE HERBERT.***

Identity: it's arguably the most critical issue that confronts all of us in relation to the delivery of Indigenous education. By identity I don't mean a form of personal singularity, I mean the diversity of identity that characterises Indigenous education.

How do we identify ourselves individually and collectively? How are we identified, individually and collectively, by others? What do we identify, as teachers, when we label our students as 'Indigenous' or 'non-Indigenous'? What do we identify, as teachers, when we use the term 'Indigenous education'?

However we answer those questions, at some level we'll end up talking about, and hopefully valuing, diversity and difference. It's our understanding and valuing of diversity and difference that enables us to deliver effective Indigenous education services or, in truth, any effective education. Without it, we'd only ever see the world through our own eyes, blinkered by our own values and beliefs, incapable of moving beyond our current attitudes and practices.

The optimist in me assumes that we educators do understand and value diversity and difference, but the fact is that the identities of Aboriginal Australians as individuals or clan groups have, since 1788, not only not been valued, but have been actively denigrated – and our education systems have played and continue to play a lead role in this in classrooms across the nation.

If you don't think the question of Aboriginal identity is contentious, it's worth reading John Gardiner-Garden's paper, 'Defining Aboriginality in Australia,' prepared for the Commonwealth parliament in 2003. As Gardiner-Garden notes, 'Two very different definitions are concurrently in use. One, predominating in legislation, defines an Aboriginal as "a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia." The other, predominating in program administration but also used in some legislation and court judgements, defines an Aboriginal as someone "who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, *identifies* as an Aboriginal *and is accepted by the Aboriginal community* as an Aboriginal."' The emphases are mine.

Critical, among many changes that occurred after the 1967 referendum, was the establishment of consultative bodies in Aboriginal education, demonstrating a recognition of the need to engage Indigenous people in the education of their children.

In 1977, the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) was established as an advisory body to the Commonwealth Minister for Education. This all-Indigenous committee drew representation from all states and territories, with members selected for their experience in formal education or for their value as community representatives. This was a critical body in the history of Australia's Indigenous education for, following the long and persistent history of Indigenous exclusion and neglect, this representative group defined an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as 'a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he lives.'

While we might, of course, usefully add 'she lives' the NAEC's agreed definition was a critical step in addressing the failure of the educational system to cater for the needs of Indigenous students for it indicated an acknowledgement that non-Indigenous people weren't necessarily the best people to speak about Indigenous educational needs and that it was critical to involve Indigenous people in educational decision-making at the highest levels.

In highlighting the diversity of Indigenous peoples and their needs, the NAEC also supported the stance of the former Aboriginal Consultative Group that reported to the Schools Commission of 1975, that Aboriginal people wanted education that would enable them to operate successfully in both their own culture and the wider Australian society.

Unfortunately, many Indigenous students participating in education programs in Australian schools continue to have their identity as Indigenous Australians regularly questioned by their fellow students or, worse, by their teachers.

The time has definitely come for our schools to accept their responsibility to provide leadership through education to effect the attitudinal change that will enable genuine reconciliation in Australian society. The critical first step is for us as teachers to understand and value the cultural differences that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and also between individual Indigenous students. By recognising and valuing such difference, at an individual and collective level, we teachers can be more effective and powerful collaborators with all of our students. ■

Professor Jeannie Herbert *holds the Chair in Indigenous Studies at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales.*

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How should we measure teacher quality?

American policymarkers seem set on capturing teacher effectiveness by using students' tests, while those in Australia take a different tack — but as ***STEVE HOLDEN*** *reports, both are in for a long haul.*

United States President Barack Obama aims to 'overhaul' the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* – aka the *No Child Left Behind Act* – of his predecessor, George W Bush, Congress willing, and the overhaul is likely to involve some measure of teacher quality in terms of student achievement.

Key stakeholders were briefed in January by Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and other US federal Department of Education officials. 'They were very clear with us that they would change the metric, dropping adequate yearly progress and basing a new system on another picture of performance based on judging schools in a more nuanced way,' Bruce Hunter, director of public policy for the American Association of School Administrators, told the *New York Times*'s Sam Dillon.

'Nuanced,' it appears, means more than adding finer lines between the big, bold pass and fail marks on the current ruler; it's code for including some measure of teacher quality in the 'picture of performance.' Not only that, nuanced measures of teacher quality are likely to include student achievement in some way.

Jack Jennings, president of the US Centre on Education Policy, who also attended the briefing, told Dillon, 'They want to recast the law so that it's as close to Race to the Top as they can get it.'

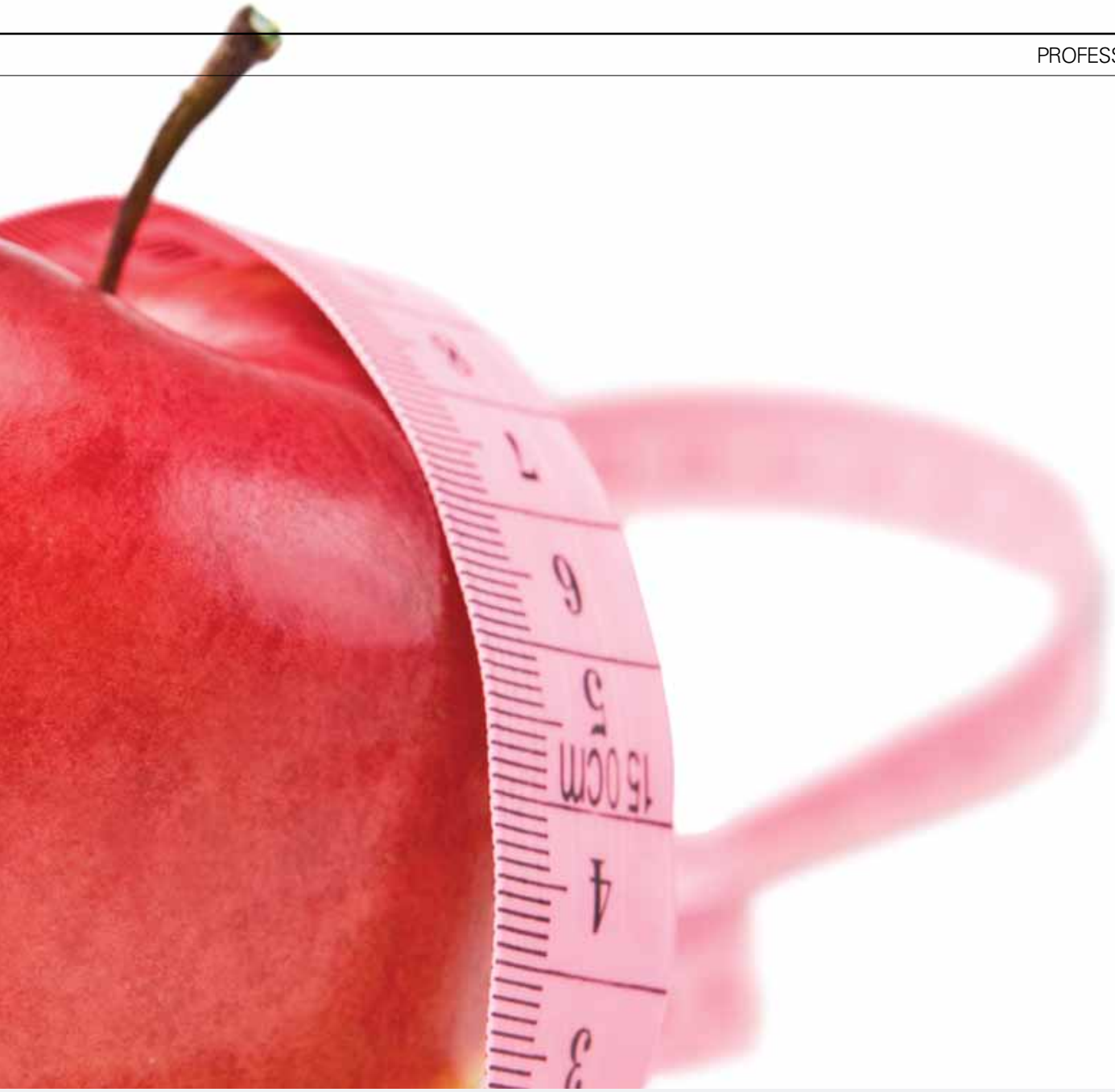
Education's moon shot

Teacher evaluation is no small part of Obama's US$4.35 billion Race to the Top program, a program Duncan has described as 'education's moon shot.' As Duncan told journalists in January, in order to participate in the Race to the Top program, 'Several states eliminated barriers to better teacher evaluation that factors in student achievement.'

Obama's Race to the Top education reforms aim to:

- establish standards and an assessment system
- measure the academic improvement of students, and
- recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers and principals.

That last dot point is all about teacher quality. As Obama explained in a visit in January to Graham Road Elementary School in Falls Church, Virginia, Race to the Top aims to 'make sure we have excellent principals leading our schools, and great teachers leading our classes,



by promoting rigorous plans to develop and evaluate teachers and principals.' Will teachers and principals be evaluated on the basis of student achievement? While not answering specifically, Obama did point out that, 'Wisconsin has enacted legislation permitting schools to link student achievement to the performance of teachers and principals.' California likewise.

That's not even code.

The importance of great teachers

Great teachers are important, we now all know, since John Hattie reported on his great, big, meta-analytic synthesis of findings from more than 500,000 evidence-based studies of the influences of teaching methods on student learning outcomes. Research, as Hattie has been saying for some time now, indicates that teachers are the major in-school influence on student achievement. They account for about 30 per cent of the variance of student achievement. Students account for 50 per cent of the variance, and the home, the school and peer effects each account for between five and 10 per cent, but 'teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement,' says Hattie, as an input that you can actually influence.

So what makes a great teacher or, put otherwise, how does teacher expertise develop? As Steve Dinham, research director of the teaching and learning program at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), explains in *How to Get Your School Moving and Improving*, it takes eight to ten years to become an expert at anything, teaching included. Drawing on the work of Stuart Dreyfus and Hubert Dreyfus, Dinham points out that, during those eight to ten years, teacher expertise moves through five stages from novice teacher through competence, proficiency and expertise to master teacher.

Personalities or practices?

The good news, as Dinham explains, is that master teachers are made, not born. There's no secret of personality, no special level of intelligence: 'All teachers,' Dinham observes, 'are capable of learning to be more effective, including highly experienced and even "stale" teachers.'

Effectiveness, in other words, is about what teachers *actually do* in the classroom, not what kind of person they are. Some research, investigating

the emphasis on practices, grounds effectiveness firmly in practice – in the structured, rules-based, routinised or choreographed behaviours of teachers. The massive Project Follow Through study, funded by the US federal government from 1967 until 1995, for example, found that structured teacher-directed methods result in consistently stronger student learning gains than those obtained from student-directed or constructivist methods.

The late Ken Rowe, in his study of the *Working Out What Works Training and Resource Manual*, reported likewise. In his examination of literacy and numeracy intervention programs and teaching strategies, he found that initial direct instruction improves student learning. 'What made the difference to students' learning and achievement progress..? Simply,' Rowe concluded, 'teachers in the intervention schools were taught how to teach.'

As Dinham points out in *How to Get Your School Moving and Improving*, though, it's worth keeping in mind that effective teaching is not about following a proforma. Yes, the behaviours of novices tend to be rule governed. Sure, novices need structure, Dinham observes, but experts or masters need autonomy, and find rules and structure inhibiting.

In their investigation of the successful teaching methodologies used by teachers of the New South Wales Higher School Certificate, Dinham and his research colleagues Paul Ayres and Wayne Sawyer, in fact, found that effective teachers employ a whole range of strategies, but, 'The key common factor was an emphasis on having students think, solve problems and apply knowledge. These teachers consciously built understanding and connected students' work to previous work, work that was yet to come, and events in the broader environment. Frequent assessment and quality feedback were hallmarks of these teachers.'

Interestingly, Dinham, Ayres and Sawyer found that effective teachers did things like using closed questions – and you thought that was a no-no? 'These teachers used different forms of questioning depending on the stage of the lesson,' Dinham explains, 'and whether the teacher was teaching the whole class or if students were working alone and in small groups. Teachers tended to use closed questions when talking to the whole group and at the beginning and end of lessons to link, revise and test understanding. This also occurred at certain break points in lessons when students were moving from one activity to the next.'

Measuring teacher effectiveness: student test scores or rigorous standards?

Okay, quality teachers are a central input that we can actually influence, so how do we best identify quality? Moves to measure teacher effectiveness here in Australia typically focus either on value-added measures of student achievement on external tests or on knowledge and skills-based or standards-based schemes, with recognition in terms of professional certification.

According to Lawrence Ingvarson, a Principal Research Fellow and formerly Research Director of the Teaching and Learning Program at ACER, value-added approaches face ongoing concerns about their validity, and they rarely last. The main problems when you measure teacher quality in terms of student achievement, says Ingvarson, are the non-random assignment of students, the effects of other teachers and the effects of student characteristics, even when controlled, as well as the effects of school policies, the non-random assignment of teachers and the appropriateness of outcome measures for the students and curriculum taught. 'Recent research also indicates that estimates of a teacher's effectiveness vary significantly from year to year,' says Ingvarson, 'also throwing doubt on the accuracy of value-added schemes.'

Standards, on the other hand, cover the full range of what good teachers are expected to know and be able to do, and that's why they provide a valid basis on which to assess a teacher's knowledge and skill, Ingvarson says. 'Well-written and detailed professional standards give teachers long-term direction in planning their professional learning and clarify the nature of the expertise that the profession expects its members to gain with experience,' he says.

When it was finally made public in August last year, the cautious *Rewarding Quality Teaching* report by a team led by Alison Gaines for the consultancy firm Gerard Daniels, broadly supported a standards-based model rather than a student test-score model to improve teacher quality.

As the report notes, schemes that tie the performance-based pay of teachers to student test scores 'build on the idea that growth in student performance is a strong indicator of teaching quality, and that it is the indicator for which it is worth paying.., (but) it makes no sense to pay for students' average performance – because the quality of teaching explains only 30 per cent of the variance in students' test scores.' That appears to be a reference to Hattie's finding that teachers account for about 30 per cent of the variance of student achievement.

The *Rewarding Quality Teaching* report concludes that:

- a performance management system should underpin a performance culture in teacher employment
- employers should 'embrace differential remuneration for teachers who are assessed as high performers,' and
- success will depend on the quality of the teacher assessment process, and

on similar teaching standards across jurisdictions.

The report sits comfortably with the findings in *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top*, a report by Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed, partners in the McKinsey and Company management consultancy. Barber and Mourshed conclude that systems where students consistently perform better than their peers in international testing have three things in common:

- they recruit the right people to become teachers
- they provide effective professional development for these people, and
- they have systems in place to ensure that every student receives excellent instruction.

Looking for a fourth dot point on teacher evaluation measured by student achievement? Absent.

Professional associations in the US have spent years working hard to develop professional standards, but changes to the *No Child Left Behind Act* that reflect the Race to the Top emphasis on teacher evaluation measured by student achievement may well leave them flat footed.

Bear in mind though, that with 124,000 or so public schools fragmented across 14,000 school districts, plus 28,000 or so private schools in the US, the attempt by Obama and his Secretary of Education to overhaul education and address teacher quality at the federal level is likely to be a long haul. If there's one thing that US politicians and educators will need, whichever model eventuates, it's grit.

Credit where credit's due

In Australia, there's a good chance that policymakers will take a standards-based approach. Speaking last August, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Julia Gillard said the *Rewarding Quality Teaching* report offered a basis for the reform of teacher remuneration arrangements in each state and territory. She stopped short of accepting its recommendations, but did observe that it 'will inform the development and implementation of new teacher pay arrangements.'

Meanwhile, the newly-established Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has released draft teaching standards for public consultation. Those draft teaching standards, roughly following the five stages of teacher expertise described by Steve Dinham, specify the skills and knowledge expected of graduate, competent, highly-accomplished and leading teachers in terms of subject content, pedagogy and professional development. The idea is that the graduate and competent levels will apply to all new teachers, while the highly-accomplished and leading teacher levels will be voluntary for experienced teachers.

While the registration or accreditation of teachers remains a state or territory responsibility, those draft teaching standards emanate from a Commonwealth, state and territory government agreement in January 2009 – the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) national partnership agreement on improving teacher quality – to create a system of national accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses; national consistency in teacher registration; and national consistency in the accreditation or certification of accomplished and leading teachers.

If this sees the light of day as a means by which teachers and school leaders can progress through a system of standards it will, in anyone's terms, result in a standards-based national certification system. Where does differential remuneration fit in? That's the big question.

Dinham and co-authors Lawrence Ingvarson and Elizabeth Kleinhenz addressed that in *Investing in Teacher*

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Quality: Doing what matters most, a 2008 report for the Business Council of Australia (BCA) that outlines the education reforms necessary for Australia to make it into the top five countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

'Suggestions to improve quality teaching tend to be simplistic, populist and non-evidenced-based. Such approaches include things such as higher salaries, "merit" pay, payment by results and getting rid of poorly performing teachers,' Dinham noted when the BCA published the report. 'What we have advocated in this report for the BCA is a much more comprehensive, integrated, evidenced-based, national approach to drive the quality of teaching upwards and to lead to increased student achievement. Central to this approach is a new career and salary structure for teachers to encourage and award greater levels of professional accomplishment.'

As Dinham, Ingvarson and Kleinhenz put it in their report, 'Salary structures for teachers need to be more effective as instruments for promoting widespread use of successful teaching practices.... We know that good teachers matter, but we must start to act as if we really believed it.' ■

'SALARY STRUCTURES FOR TEACHERS NEED TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AS INSTRUMENTS FOR PROMOTING WIDESPREAD USE OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHING PRACTICES.... WE KNOW THAT GOOD TEACHERS MATTER, BUT WE MUST START TO ACT AS IF WE REALLY BELIEVED IT.'

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Assessment

Informed teaching, and learning

Research into high-performing schools clearly indicates the importance of the frequent evaluation of student progress. ***JOHN FLEMING*** *explains how he's done that.*

The research into high-performing schools clearly indicates the importance of the following factors:

- strong educational leadership
- high expectations of students and staff
- an emphasis on time on task
- a safe and orderly environment, and
- the frequent evaluation of student progress.

Here, I want to focus on the last of these factors. How do high-performing schools use the information they receive about student achievement to generate school improvement?

To answer that, let me consider two case studies with which I've been closely involved, Bellfield Primary School and Haileybury College, both in Melbourne.

Bellfield Primary School is a government primary school in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs, where I was principal from 1995 to 2005. Bellfield serviced an exceptionally disadvantaged community. In 2005, 85 per cent of parents were on the Educational Maintenance Allowance; 61 per cent of students were from single-parent families; 25 per cent of students were from non-English speaking backgrounds; and about 10 per cent of students were Indigenous.

A well-documented transformation took place at Bellfield during this decade. The school moved from a situation where over 80 per cent of the students were failing dismally in statewide literacy and numeracy testing to one where the overwhelming majority of the students performed at the top of the state. The effective use of student data played a significant role in this transformation, alongside the adoption of an explicit instruction model of curriculum delivery.

Bellfield used statewide testing, ongoing classroom testing, and the Reading Progress Test (RPT) and the Numeracy Progress Test (NPT) from the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) to drive school improvement.

The RPT and NPT were delivered every November to all year levels. At Bellfield, we first used these tests in 1997. They enabled us to benchmark every child, each year level and the entire school. Furthermore, they allowed the leadership team to identify those students who would need extra support and those who would need to be further extended. The student data was used in the annual staff appraisal process as evidence of teacher performance. The notion of value added was discussed and analysed in terms of individual student performance, year-level performance and whole-school performance. We selected the RPT and NPT because they were time effective in terms of student completion and teacher correction.

These tests were an integral component of the school improvement agenda at Bellfield. They were instrumental in validating our curriculum choices and in setting targets for teachers. The overall school performance indicator for both literacy and numeracy provided much-needed recognition of teacher effort as student achievement increased from year to year. It generated a belief in the success of our initiatives and guided us in future planning and target-setting.

Haileybury College, a multi-campus school in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, is a high-performing independent school. In 2006 I was appointed as head of the Berwick campus and remained head until this year, when I took up the role of deputy principal of junior school teaching and learning.

In 2006, Haileybury adopted the November testing approaches advocated by evidence-based research, similar to the approach that I've described for Bellfield, particularly to demonstrate that programs add value for students.

What is this value adding? A value add is an improvement in student achievement, in excess of what could normally be expected, due to effective teacher instruction.

Haileybury tests all students in Prep to Year 8 each November with the Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) in both literacy and numeracy and the Single Word Spelling Test (SWST). ACER marks the tests and supplies data on student achievement, class achievement and teacher performance. Each teacher receives data for the previous year's class depicting the value-added data and raw data for each student and the class as a whole. They are then expected to reflect on the data and prepare their curriculum delivery based on the data.

Bellfield and Haileybury used statewide and now national testing in similar ways. The figures were extensively analysed to benchmark against other schools, to track ongoing student progress, to compare year levels and to undertake item analysis to drive curriculum development. Specific ongoing plans were then developed to support further student improvement. The 2009 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data clearly showed that the students at Haileybury in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 were exceptionally high performing.

It's the use of the ACER data to determine teacher value added, however, that has driven Haileybury to the forefront of data evaluation. In conjunction with ACER, we've determined a scale to benchmark individual and class value added from year to year. This information is provided to all teachers from Prep to Year 8 for both literacy and numeracy.

It's a vital component of the annual professional recognition program that we use to evaluate teacher performance. It brings a vital new view to teacher appraisal that focuses on student achievement and teacher effectiveness. It's also an intrinsic measure used to evaluate teacher effectiveness for the exemplary teacher performance bonus awarded each year to our highest-performing teachers.

Bellfield and Haileybury obviously service very different communities, but it's apparent that very similar approaches to the use of data have proven worthwhile in both settings.

A common curriculum approach, the Fleming Model of Effective Teaching, has been implemented at both schools. As Elizabeth Kleinhenz and I explain in *Towards a Moving School,* it's a model based on the four pillars of teacher accountability, explicit instruction, moving student learning from short-term to long-term memory, and creating effective relationships between teachers and students.

In recent years schools and education systems have become increasingly proficient at gathering student achievement data, but for many schools this is where the process often stalls, mainly because educators don't fully analyse this information. Both Bellfield and Haileybury show how big an impact the effective interpretation of this data can have on both teaching and learning, and consequently on improved student achievement. ■

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY PROFICIENT AT GATHERING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA, BUT FOR MANY SCHOOLS THIS IS WHERE THE PROCESS OFTEN STALLS.

John Fleming *is deputy principal of Haileybury College, Melbourne, and co-author with Elizabeth Kleinhenz of* Towards a Moving School: Developing a professional learning and performance culture. *This article is based on his presentations at the ACER Education Forum on Using Assessments to Inform Teaching and Learning in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland in March and April, hosted by ACER Press.*

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Jonathon Welch
My best teacher

Steve Holden catches up with one of Australia's most recognisable choir leaders, ***JONATHON WELCH****, and discovers a man on a mission – to put social justice in the middle of the mainstream.*

Catch a spare hour with Jonathon Welch and you immediately realise you're talking with a man on a mission. At the end of 1992, the Opera Australia tenor walked away from what was, in his words, 'a successful and supposedly glamorous career,' before finding himself, with a few detours along the way, working with homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people in some of Australia's finest community choirs, most notably the Choir of Hard Knocks, now called the Choir of Hope and Inspiration.

He realised, he says, that his musical gifts would be best used serving the community. 'I've been given these skills, not to just sit in a studio or a rehearsal room,' he says. 'You're given them to use, to "play it forward," to pass your skills on to other people, who can then pass them on. I realised there were greater challenges and things to discover. I don't like to get too comfortable.'

Welch's work in the area of social justice keeps him well outside his comfort zone. 'How I respond to the work I do,' he says, 'is my own personal challenge, but I know that when I stifle my creativity I become unhappy, so I'm happy to challenge myself.'

That challenge, and the interest in social justice, was clearly evident in Welch's

work with the Voices from Inside Choir of women at Tarrengower Prison, broadcast in the *Jail Birds* documentary series on ABC television last year.

If you watched that series, you would've seen something rare on any television screen: people actually learning and teaching. His aim, says Welch, is to help people to learn for themselves.. His aim as a teacher, says Welch, is to help people to learn for themselves. 'People are looking for good, clear direction,' he explains, 'as well as the opportunity to take that and make it their own. They're best able to do that,' he adds, 'when you use a combination of instruction, clear guidance and lots of experience so they have plenty of opportunity to absorb what you have to offer.

'When you're teaching a large group, you have to recognise that everyone learns differently, unlike a one-to-one situation where you can tailor what you do quite specifically. Working in large groups is more like Monet, very broad brush strokes, while working one-to-one is more like Rembrandt, where you can be quite specific, quite technical, even.'

Half an hour into conversation, you realise that if Welch is a man on a mission, he's also a man who can put his ego in a box. Whether it's a senior role in a production for Opera Australia, leading a choir, appearing in a television documentary or working with the New South Wales Department of Education through the Southern Stars and Wollongong Performers Company, the Training Development Program or the School Spectacular, Welch is surprisingly unassuming. Flamboyant, yes, but ego-driven, no. His mission, quite evidently, is to help other people.

'You don't take on the role if there's not that part of you that wants to pass on knowledge and skill, that wants to care, that wants people to fulfill their potential,' he explains. 'I think teachers have these things innately. My sister is a teacher and my brother teaches at TAFE, and I know they both get real satisfaction from seeing people pursue their dream, but,' he adds, 'teaching is still grossly undervalued and unrewarded in Australia.'

If Welch is a person with a deep understanding of learning, that's perhaps because he's well able to learn for himself. 'In my childhood,' he admits, 'I was terribly shy, and to become a performer I had to build my confidence. In a show, you can find a character and use that to build your confidence, but I wanted to find that confidence in myself, and I wanted to help other people to find that confidence in themselves.'

Welch might be a good learner, but he also counts himself lucky to have learned from many great teachers as well. He was taught at Melbourne High School by American exchange teacher, Rodney Rothlisberger.

'Rodney was the protégé of Rodney Eichenberger, who's considered to be one of the key exponents of the subconscious effect of body language in conducting,' he says. 'He was a very demanding, but passionate and inspiring mentor.'

Bettine McCaughan was another very influential singing teacher. 'What made Bettine a great teacher was the way she related to me, and her method of using incredibly imaginative imagery to impart her knowledge.

'Max Speed, my singing teacher in Sydney, really started to develop my voice. Donald Smith, one of Australia's greatest tenors, teaching at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in the 1980s, taught quite differently again. Donald would demonstrate. Max was very specifically kinetic. Bettine was more visual.

'Someone who's been another great teacher and mentor for me,' he adds, 'is John Bolton Wood. His gift wasn't to teach about singing, but to give me life skills as a singer.'

That's quite a roll call of legendary teachers in Australia's music community, but it's not the end of Welch's list.

'My very first great teacher,' he says, 'was my mother, who gave me first and foremost unconditional love, and whose gift was to accept people into her life and treat them with great respect. I saw her mentor a lot of other singers, and saw her encourage them to follow their dreams. My sister wanted to be a teacher. My brother wanted to be a plumber. I wanted to be a singer. She encouraged us all.'

With the gifts of acceptance, respect and encouragement, it's no surprise that Welch is in the middle of a successful and supposedly glamorous career, as a choirmaster, and he's not stopping anytime soon. ■

Jonathon Welch *has created the School of Hard Knocks Foundation, to be launched by patron Jimmy Barnes this year, to provide homeless and disadvantaged people with educational opportunities through music, arts and cultural programs as part of the Play It Forward program. He is also the founder of Social Inclusion Week and the National Street Party, in association with the Commonwealth Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Origin Energy and Realestate.com.au. His memoir,* Choir Man, *was published by Harper Collins in 2009.*

LINKS:
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http://socialinclusionweek.ning.com
www.nationalstreetparty.com.au

10 things
I've learned about teaching

Western Australian Teacher and winner of the Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching ***ALLAN WHITTOME*** *has learned plenty of things about teaching. Here are 10 of them.*

01 Learning is not a competition, but if you teach as though it is, your students' learning will only be narrow and short lived. Real learning has to have a purpose, and relevance or connection for the learner, if it's to have any consequence. The learner needs to be at the centre and to have some ownership over the learning. All students have strengths and good teaching is about using these to guide them into other learning. You need to be part of the learning yourself, to place yourself in the situation of the learner.

02 The curriculum is like the road map and, as with most journeys, there is more than one route that you can choose to reach your destination. Sometimes there isn't, some things just have to be done a certain way, but then there are also times when you have to make your own road.

03 Many primary school teachers are unaware of the science teaching they already do in their classrooms. Teaching science doesn't necessarily have to happen in a discrete time block because science is occurring all the time. Science very often lends itself to another learning area. The Primary Connections program of the Australian Academy of Science shows you how to make links between science and other learning areas like literacy and numeracy. In the early childhood area, for example, *The Three Little Pigs* lends itself to investigating materials, shapes and forces. Get your students to use 3D mind maps to represent their understanding before and after.

Students need to *experience* the things they are learning in order to make the connections and then extend their understanding. It's hard to know what a kilogram is until you've felt a kilogram. Then you have something to relate to. How can students understand heat until they know what it looks like and feels like? When a 45-degree day comes along you can show the students what it feels like to be nearly half way to the boiling point of water. Just because it isn't science day doesn't mean the situation can't be used. How do you teach cold or wet or hard? Concepts need experience, experience before experiments.

04 If you want students to learn, you have to let them play, and get hands-on experience. How do we learn from play? We try something. If it works we use it again, we tell our friends. If it doesn't work, we try again and change things until we get it to work for us, then we tell our friends, they try it, and they change things or keep them the same. That's very much like a simple scientific method. Play, experience and hands-on approaches allow students to develop, explore and tune their understandings of concepts as well as the processes they can use to try something new. Through scaffolding and structured play, they can be taken through the scientific method as a real-life experience and a way of making new learning from what has happened, positive or negative, before you move on to a more formalised use of scientific method.

You don't have to road test everything. In the past, teachers probably had to be right. When they did something, it had to work. With so many resources and so much information available today, learning can involve failure as a tool that allows teachers as much as students to build new learning and understanding.

05 I use references with my students all the time, but we don't use one set textbook. The amount of information available today is huge, and growing and changing all the time, so I want my students to develop their abilities to source and validate information.

06 Professional and industry experience is really useful. Things are changing all the time and we have the responsibility to give our students the skills to be able to participate and function in this and the future world. Much of the time we're operating away from the leading edge although occasionally we can be the leaders, as with the Re-Engineering Australia Foundation's *F1 in Schools Challenge* that gives students the opportunity to be the leaders ahead of what is being done in industry.

To keep up with current developments and advances it's important to create links or partnerships with organisations beyond your school, not only for your school but also for those organisations: our students are their future too.

My experience at Badgingarra Primary School, between Geraldton and Perth, Western Australia, is that some organisations come to us wishing to make links. Other times I'll initiate contact for a specific task, but then the students become the spokespersons or contacts. Either way, we look at what we can give back to the organisation for the assistance they give us and try to work with them, involve them.

07 The best professional learning allows you to network with others and actually undertake or be involved. The Science Summer School I attended at Flinders University in 2007 was a very inspiring learning experience. I benefited immensely from working alongside other teachers, being able to address challenging leading-edge science topics, working in an environment using new technologies, being shown different pathways for science learning and how we can move students to develop the thinking processes they need to tackle the problems facing the world in the future.

I find the best professional learning experiences are the ones where you have to make some of the outcome yourself and come away with something you feel you've achieved. At the opposite extreme, there are those where a presenter pontificates and then tells you how good what you're being told is.

The best professional learning experience I've had was a week-long photography workshop – this was before digital – in a most beautiful setting. We were shown techniques in a hands-on class and then allowed to develop these further through open-ended projects with a showcase and review at the end of the day. It was very exhausting but I left feeling confident about what I'd learned. It was a good professional learning experience because it was a warts and all approach.

08 Everyone learns in a class environment where everyone supports and values each other. Every student has a strength in some area and you can use those strengths to support each student and to help other students. For example, we have a student with major learning challenges as a result of an accident but he has an incredible skill when it comes to handling and caring for reptiles. I've been able to use this to develop his other learning skills, and other students will come to him for advice. When we use the strengths of everyone in the class we don't just have 23 students and one teacher but 24 students and 24 teachers. The beauty of this is that I'm able to learn along with my students.

09 It's my good fortune at Badgingarra Primary School to teach with other teachers and other students. We're very flexible, collegial, open to change and sharing. Because we're not tied to a classroom as the learning environment we can be very mobile, which gives us a greater variety of ways to cater for the differing learning needs of students. The best collegial practices I've experienced are where we team teach, complete skill sessions then use these in authentic learning tasks or challenges embedded in integrated studies.

We live at a time when science is at the heart of some big, and contested, global issues and that's a good thing for science teaching, since developing science literacy and critical thinking allows people to make informed decisions for themselves. It's important for us to be able to analyse different positions and come to a decision for ourselves as opposed to being led by what we're told.

10 Information technologies have given us far more information than ever before, so we need the skills to be able to make a balanced judgement on issues. Yes, we need to allow our students to work with science based on facts, but we also need to allow them to work in the areas of investigation and further research where the answers to these big, and contested, global issues lie. The good news is that the ideas of the young, things that are as yet untried, are where the future solutions lie. ■

Allan Whittome *is a teacher at Badgingarra Primary School, Western Australia, and the winner of the 2009 Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools.*

Photo of Allan Whittome by Bearcage Productions courtesy of Science in Public.

Top tips for beginning teachers

*Award-winning teacher **JANE DOBSON** shares her five top tips for beginning teachers.*

When I won the Excellence by a Beginning Teacher category in the 2009 Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, I was asked if I could provide some tips to *Inside Teaching* specifically for beginning teachers.

By the time I received the award, I'd actually almost finished my fourth year of teaching, so the request got me thinking back to that first year out of university. I recall being in front of a bunch of teenagers, who would probably rather have been just about anywhere else than in my Maths class on a Friday afternoon.

The sheer terror I felt makes it seem like this was only yesterday. At the same time, if I think about all the things I've learned in the past four years, it feels like a lifetime ago.

Every beginning teacher has different strengths and weaknesses along with different experiences when they enter their very own classroom for the first time, so I don't pretend I can give each beginning teacher all the answers. Most of us have enough in common, though, that some of the tips I give here will be useful.

TIP 1: DON'T PANIC

During the first year of teaching, you'll experience a range of emotions, everything from excitement and joy to anxiety and trepidation. The really confusing times can be when you seem to be feeling all these emotions at once. Reminding yourself that this is perfectly normal and that every other beginning teacher will experience these highs and lows at some point can help you to put things in perspective.

This is especially the case at 10 o'clock on a Sunday night when you suddenly realise you've forgotten to prepare that worksheet for the first class on Monday morning.

It's true when the data projector decides it's suddenly not going to work and your entire lesson depends on the students watching some clips on YouTube. These things happen to everyone - even experienced teachers.

Taking a deep breath and remaining calm, at least on the outside, will usually get you through.

You'll have bad lessons that you would rather forget, but this happens to everyone, even the most experienced teachers. The most important thing is to learn from them. It's important to try not to put too much pressure on yourself.

You're not super-human and no one expects you to be.

TIP 2 : DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

Ask for help if you need it. I clearly remember moments during my first year out when I found myself thinking, 'What am I doing here?' and, 'I'm just not sure I can do this.'

When I had times like this I found that getting together with other teachers, whether in the staffroom or walking around on yard duty, and just talking to them was a huge help. If I had a difficult student, or a situation that I just didn't know how to handle, these informal chats often provided me with ideas, but also with the extra bit of confidence I needed to tackle the issue head on.

Sometimes the problem you face may require a bit more than an informal chat. In my first year I was assigned a class called 'Models, Boats and Planes.' I didn't know much about models, boats or planes. I thought it sounded interesting, though, so I was happy to give it a go until I walked into the classroom and realised that it had been timetabled in a metal workshop.

I'd trained as a Science teacher and I felt prepared to teach in an environment with its own safety concerns, but a room with welders, cutting machines, circular saws and so on was absolutely terrifying. I knew I wouldn't feel comfortable teaching in that environment, but I was also worried about going to my principal and looking like I couldn't cope.

I eventually plucked up the courage to talk to my principal who totally agreed with me and thanked me for bringing it to her attention, and I got the class moved to a more appropriate room.

Asking for help, I discovered, isn't a sign of weakness. Your colleagues have all been there and will recognise this.

TIP 3 : LEARN TO SAY NO

Learning to say no may sound like a strange tip, but I actually think this was one of the most important lessons I learned in my first year out, although I did have to learn it the hard way.

Being my first job and in my probationary year, I was naturally eager to impress, so I put my hand up for absolutely everything. This meant that I suddenly found myself not only having all my classes to organise, but also helping to run the student representative council, organising the Maths relay team and doing the

costume alterations for the school production, which involved coming to school for a number of consecutive weekends. I ended up being totally exhausted, contracting a nasty cold and having to take a few days off work.

Looking back, I realise now that no-one would have thought any less of me for not helping out with the production; after all I was a Science and Maths teacher and I had plenty of things to organise there. If I'd just said no to that one thing I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have hit that wall. It's really important to look after yourself because when you're healthy and feeling good you'll be far more effective in the classroom.

TIP 4 : TAKE OPPORTUNITIES AND NETWORK

As teachers we often find that we have the chance to do things that most people never will. For me, this has included going down a working silver-zinc mine, taking a tour of a hydroelectric power station, going inside a wind turbine, working with scientists from the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and even visiting Antarctica.

Many of these experiences required me to give up a couple of days of my holidays or the occasional weekend. At the same time, however, it meant that I not only met many other teachers teaching the same subjects as me, which wouldn't have happened otherwise, but I also met many outside experts who weren't teachers, but were interested in education and were happy to work with my classes. Building yourself a solid network of teachers and industry and other experts will make your job a lot easier.

There are also many other learning opportunities within our profession that can enhance your knowledge and understanding, and inform your pedagogy. Apply for everything that interests you – if you don't get it approved the first time you can always wait for something similar to come round again.

Within my first few years of teaching I found myself succeeding in being selected for a number of things I didn't expect including: a focus group to rewrite Science courses for the state; a statewide role coordinating Physics teachers; and going to Sydney to have an input into the new national curriculum.

I invariably found myself being one of the youngest, least experienced people in the room, which can be intimidating, but I soon realised that a fresh view is really welcomed in most situations.

It's easy to assume that because you're a new teacher you don't stand a chance of being selected for opportunities, whether it's a trip to Antarctica or presenting a new idea at a staff meeting, but if you don't try you'll never know. You may even be pleasantly surprised at what you can achieve early in your career.

TIP 5 : ENJOY YOURSELF

This is easily the most important tip. Teaching is a busy, exciting and rewarding career, and it's really important to enjoy what you're doing. If you don't enjoy what you're doing, your students will pick up on it and they won't enjoy themselves either. A smile is infectious.

It's not a tip to observe that it will get easier over time, but it is true. It's important to remember that working with young people in schools is an absolutely wonderful experience. They will challenge you, occasionally disappoint you and, as often as not, exceed your expectations, but overall they'll make you proud to be a teacher.

I like to remind myself that, as Albert Einstein once said, 'A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.' It's a quotation I have on the wall of my science lab, and it's as important for us teachers as it is for our students to remember that we learn best when we try something new, make mistakes and enjoy things together. ■

Jane Dobson *was born in England and obtained her Masters Degree in Physics in Wales, after which she took a 'year out' to travel and work in Australia – seven years ago. She completed her Bachelor of Teaching at the University of Tasmania.*

She was the winner of the Excellence by a Beginning Teacher national award in the 2009 Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

LINKS:
For more information on beginning teachers visit:

www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/Library.html

http://beginningtoteach.qct.edu.au

www.trb.tas.gov.au/information-resources.htm

Seventh National Interactive Teaching and Learning Conference

(formerly IWB Conference) 12, 13 and 14 August, 2010

IWBNet will host the Seventh National Interactive Teaching and Learning Conference (formerly IWB conference) on 12, 13 and 14 August 2010 at Saint Stephen's College, Gold Coast.

The Theme of the Conference is: *The Changing Landscape*

The digital technology landscape for teaching and learning has changed over the last few years. So too will the thrust of this national conference change in 2010 to meet the needs of all schools where ever they stand in the interactive teaching and learning continuum.

Come and listen to our **two fantastic keynote speakers;** Chris Betcher and Greg Gebhart. Chris will look at the global impact of IWBs in teaching and schooling and Greg will share ideas on 21st century learning and changing the classroom dynamics.

A sample of the sessions available in the program are:

- Enhanced teaching with an IWB
- Game based learning in Secondary Education
- IWB and Inquiry Learning
- Multi-Mice SRS
- Google for Educators
- What's a Prezi?
- Cool Fun Stuff

Download the comprehensive program and register online at http://www.iwb.net.au/conferences/australian10

Fourth National Leading a Digital School Conference

Leading digital schools to embrace the best of the present and the future

IWBNet will host the Fourth National Leading a Digital School Conference at the Crown Conference Centre Melbourne on 2, 3 and 4 September.

Conference sessions will explore how school leaders can develop their schools as centres of excellence, showcasing digital technology in all aspects of school life – not only teaching and learning!

Three keynote speakers; Dr Michael Hough, Greg Black and Don Collins, one at the beginning of each day, will focus on: education futures and technology; the critical elements of educational leadership today; and educational technology leadership.

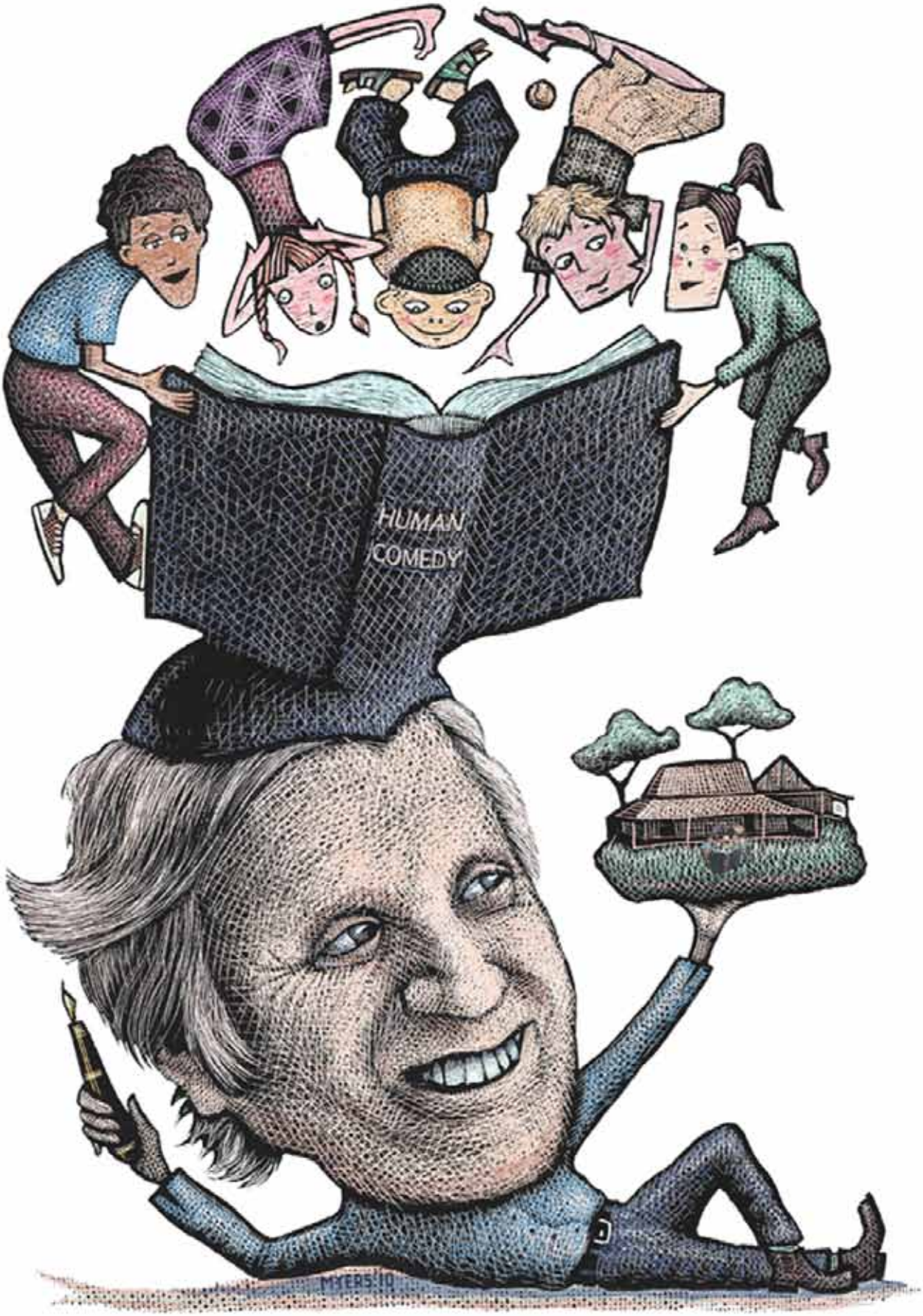
A sample of the sessions available in the program are:

- Future Focus Mobile Learning
- Using Contemporary Pedagogical Models to Guide the Use of ICT
- Twitter in Education
- Whole School Reflections on Learning
- Cybersafety in Schools
- Developing Deep Thinkers through Podcasting
- Towards a Post Digital Education
- Connecting You Now

Download the comprehensive program and register online at http://www.iwb.net.au/conferences/digital10

Ask about our Group Discount for three or more!!

If you would like us to send you further information about these conferences including the programs please email team@iwb.net.au or call 1800 760 108 – www.iwb.net.au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20 questions* with John Marsden

*David Rish interviewed **JOHN MARSDEN**, and discovered a writer, teacher and school principal who's still amazed by learning.*

If there was only one book in the Candlebark school library, what would it be?

The Human Comedy by William Saroyan, a wise and beautiful book.

Where does the name 'Marsden' come from?

It's a Yorkshire name. A great, great, great uncle was known as the Flogging Parson, an unpleasant chap who boasted that he liked to try on Friday, hang on Sunday.

What was your first writing success, before So Much to Tell You*?*

In Year 4 with a friend we published the *4C Chronicle* and everything we wrote got in because we were the publishers – an empowering experience.

What was the poster on the teenage John Marsden's wall?

The great Bob Dylan, still revered.

Do you have your teaching certificates and book awards on display?

No, in both cases, but my mother told me I should have them somewhere so I organised a bookcase. The awards and first editions and all that are just ephemera.

Who's your favourite character from The Simpsons*?*

Ned Flanders, because he's so awful, like a distillation of the worst of every Christian television preacher.

Are you in tune with pop culture generally?

Just by being around young people you have to be aware of it. Anyone thinking of starting their own vampire series probably shouldn't as the whole vampire thing is likely to be about to die a natural death, unlike vampires!

Do you have moments when you want your portrait and giant statues everywhere?

No, definitely! I've had my portrait painted a number of times, but found the process uncomfortable. I bought one large painting, but haven't put it on display or even unwrapped it. It'll probably be like Dorian Gray's portrait if I do eventually reveal it to the world.

A joke you've been told by a student recently?

Knock-knock.
Who's there?
No-one.
No-one who?

Do your students have a nickname for you?

Everyone at Candlebark, where I'm the principal, tends to use first names.

Would your childhood best friend be surprised at where you've ended up?

No, we were both idealistic young men. He got a medical degree and worked in aboriginal health in central Australia – a principled human with a commitment to improving life.

Which person, living, reanimated or fictional, would you like to have as a guest teacher?

The American poet Robert Frost who conveys so much so simply.

What would you like to be if you get a next life?

A musician. Perhaps a dog. Border collies seem to live life to the full.

Which title would you choose for a hypothetical autobiography: Teacher, Writer, Teacher/Writer *or* John Marsden, King of Cool*?*

I'd like maybe *Looking For Trouble*, but I've already used that for a novel.

What's your favourite sound?

Cello, and the powerful owls around Candlebark.

In the bush do you pay more attention to the micro or the macro?

I probably pay more attention to the trees than to the sky – the middle view.

Did your time at Timbertop influence the Tomorrow series?

Definitely. It made me realise how much young people can achieve. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds would achieve so much on both a physical and mental level – you'd never imagine their abilities.

Will you ever stop writing?

I'm not doing much at the moment, but teaching is my creative outlet. I'll always teach or write.

Would you have been as good a writer if you'd always done it full time?

No, the only way to learn about human nature is to mingle and mix. Teaching is good because human nature in its rawest form is in front of you every day.

Can anyone learn to be creative?

Yes, but for some it's a harder challenge. Put people in a constantly stimulating environment, expose them to ideas and art forms, constantly challenge them. I once had a student who I always thought of as dull creatively, but who ended up going to an important film school in Melbourne. Creativity can be switched on at any time.

Was there a moment when you thought, 'I have to be a teacher?'

It was during Years 9 and 10, sitting in the back of classrooms, bored and intensely going mad, thinking why on earth my teachers had to teach in such a boring manner, that there had to be better ways to inspire young people; so it was the bad examples of teachers rather than the inspiring ones. There were some inspirational teachers, though, mainly in the primary years.

Obviously teaching is a very difficult job. What can be done to make sure our teachers are the best?

I select my staff mainly by looking for those who've achieved success beyond just teaching. They should have travelled, have an adventurous spirit, spirit generally. It's helpful to have taught in other environments, for example overseas or in remote areas. To attract better teachers it's important to give the job more prestige. Teachers and schools shouldn't be whipping targets for politicians out to score cheap points. The job should be made more attractive.

How?

Money could be part of it. Cutting down on bureaucracy is pretty important. Meaningless staff meetings, much report writing and suchlike are energy and spirit sapping. A teacher's energy and resources are not infinite and it's better to put them into the job, into inspiring the students.

What can be done with bad teachers?

They should be sacked because they're destroying people's lives.

How should a teacher be different from a parent?

A teacher has an emotional detachment and can make decisions that are more objectively based. A teacher can and should be more even-tempered partly because of a time issue. The 24/7 of being a parent is harder. A teacher shouldn't try and be the parent. It's important for young people to be exposed to adults who are politically and socially, and in other ways different to their parents. A teacher, by providing a different view, opens up a child's world.

Does a good teacher need to be a good actor?

No. The best teachers know their subject well, work hard and are fair. If you've got those three things as a teacher you'll be effective and respected.

Do you have the occasional doubt about your decision to take on the job of founding and being the principal of a day school?

I admit I occasionally wonder if it was a good idea, but although the job is hard, it's exhilarating.

The most stressful moments are when a student goes home and tells a story to his or her parents about something that's happened and then the parent comes storming in complaining and I have to sort out the problem. Again, it's an energy thing; limited energy is better put into the students and into finding ways to make the school run better.

When faced with the tough moments that occur in any school, I pretend that I'm the mouthpiece and speak the words that are for the good of the whole school. I have to step away from being myself and be the mouthpiece. I try not to take these things personally.

Is there such a thing as a typical day for a student at Candlebark?

The school isn't really radical. The day starts with a short morning meeting where every one sits in a circle in a double classroom. We might do some yoga exercises, a drama game, watch a YouTube video, tell a story. Comments and announcements are made. The classes then go off to do their general subjects. A variation is that the students all do a period of chess each week. They have opportunities for extension interest subjects, which might be playing basketball or doing cake decorating. Wednesday afternoon is free time when the students can take part in a variety of activities or make their own choices about how to spend time. Each week there are a couple of silent reading times.

The school has more class excursions, and sometimes whole-school excursions, than a general school. We recently spent a week away at Angelsea. The school also encourages incursions where guests come in and share their

particular knowledge and expertise. The kids are encouraged to be adventurous physically and mentally.

Another difference is that food is available all day long. The school provides good food to encourage good eating habits. The school has a good organic veggie garden. Sharing food weaves a good social exchange.

What makes Candlebark has something to do with courtesy. If you're having a problem with a student, you can ask, 'Does anyone treat you in that way?' You can then challenge their behaviour in a courteous manner. We have normal kids who have normal problems, but it's a relatively problem-free school.

Staff meetings: are they a useful exchange of ideas or living hell?

We don't have many at Candlebark. There's an informal meeting on Monday morning before classes for 45 minutes, plus some in-service stuff. Time and energy is better spent in teaching, although obviously we meet the reporting required by government. There's no playground duty, though, as there's no staffroom. Teachers are available all the time. Planning is done wherever, inside or outside.

Is there a spiritual dimension to Candlebark?

Not as such, but it's in tune with the earth. Sometimes when in large gatherings we'll join hands and say a secular prayer. Beliefs are openly and non-judgmentally discussed.

In any afterlife would you hang with the teachers or the young folk?

There are days when I love the company of adults, telling war stories, and there are days when the energy of kids is fantastic. Playing bad cricket with a tennis ball with the kids is one highlight among many of the ordinary day.

Is there actually such a thing as an ordinary day at Candlebark?

(Laughs.)

Can you tell me of a moment when you've gone, 'Heck, I did a really good job teaching that,' and can you manufacture or repeat these moments?

You have to keeping pushing forward boldly and creatively as a teacher and those moments will come. Writing is about solving problems. Every book is about solving one big problem and hundreds of little ones. It's the same in the classroom. You'll have lots of moments of exhilaration. If a particular kid is having a problem, find a solution to stop their life bogging down.

Teaching is a noble job.

What's your view on having a balance between youth and experience in the teaching staff?

It's important to try and achieve that balance. There was a sad and bad clean out of older teachers in Victoria a number of years ago. That was a terrible mistake.

Should a large portion of the curriculum be driven by students' interests?

No, that's crap. As adults, we have knowledge and experience to put together a helpful, relevant and challenging curriculum. Candlebark isn't a democracy. It comprises an impressive team of committed adults with experience and moral principles.

What would you do if you had Deputy Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Education Julia Gillard at school for the day?

I can't believe we have a Labor government that thinks like old-style Liberals, enforcing bureaucratic regulations and controlling everything, both things being anathema to good teaching. Julia's day might be to shadow a student to see how stimulating and rewarding the education is for the students; how they learn a respect for the environment and their world generally; how it satisfies culturally; and how the wishes and aspirations of parents are met.

Have you considered going into politics?

Politics is an ugly business, unforgiving. Not for me.

Do we need more diversity in schools?

Yes. There's a bloke in Melbourne who runs a martial arts school for difficult kids. He does a good specific job. We should encourage diversity and schools should be encouraged to experiment and keep other schools informed so they can learn from the experiences and implement their own changes. ■

** Okay, okay, if you counted the questions you'd know there are more than 20.*

John Marsden *is one of Australia's most awarded and popular writers for teenagers., having sold more than two and a half million books since* So Much to Tell You *was published in 1987. He is the founding principal of Candlebark, a Prep to Year 8 school north of Melbourne that he describes as 'somewhere between Steiner and* The Simpsons,' *and 'based to a considerable extent on the principles of Fitzroy Community School in Melbourne.'*

David Rish *is an award-winning writer for children and a regular contributor to* Inside Teaching.

LINKS: www.candlebark.info

Two steps One step back

The academic achievement of Australia's Indigenous students is hindered by ongoing disadvantage, as ***SUE THOMSON*** *and* ***LISA DE BORTOLI*** *explain.*

Many Indigenous students are trapped in a cycle that takes them two steps forward and one step back: they're less likely than other students to go to preschool and are more likely to skip school. Often, their parents have not completed high school. A poor start to school mixed with truancy leads to low academic achievement and, in turn, low self-esteem. They eventually leave what schooling they have completed and in time have children of their own – and so the cycle repeats.

There's no doubting the disparity that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students are less likely to have access to textbooks, a computer, an internet connection, a desk or even a quiet place in which to study. As Indigenous students continue through school education, the gap widens between their academic achievement and that of their non-Indigenous peers.

Our recent study comparing the performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students offers an insight into the factors that have impact over time on the educational performance of Indigenous students.

That study, 'Contextual factors that influence the achievements of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006,' draws on three cycles of data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and describes the affective behaviours and background factors that influence Indigenous student achievement.

PISA

Established by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1997, PISA aims to monitor the outcome of education systems worldwide. It measures how well 15-year olds nearing the end of compulsory education are prepared for life beyond the schoolyard by testing their skills in reading, mathematics and science using questions that draw on real-life situations.

PISA was first carried out in 2000 and has continued every three years since. As well as assessing their performance, students are asked to fill out a questionnaire detailing their demographic, social and educational background, providing information for analysis and comparison – in this case, allowing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to be compared.

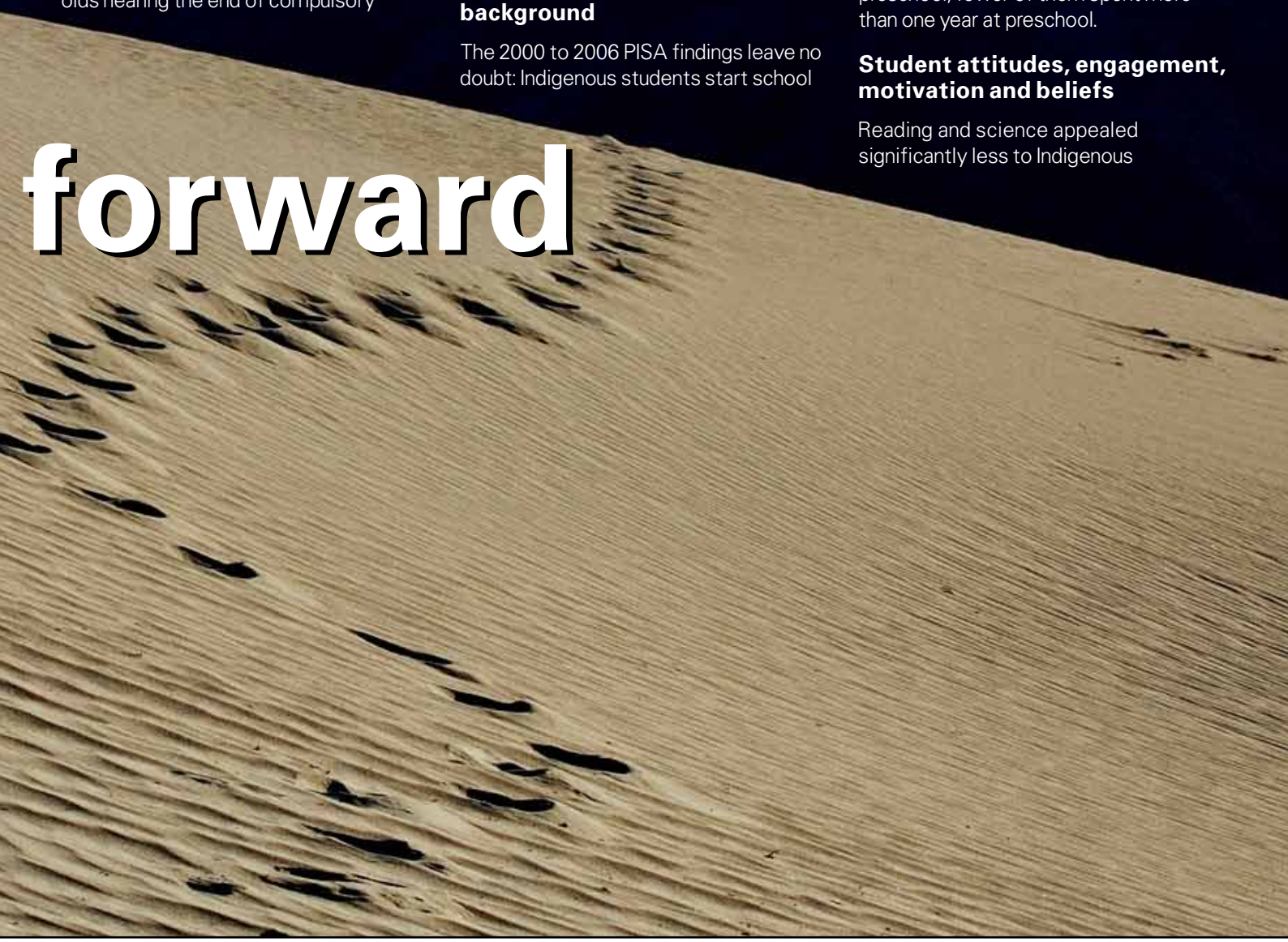
Home and educational background

The 2000 to 2006 PISA findings leave no doubt: Indigenous students start school life on the back foot. Fewer Indigenous students had a parent with a university degree and significantly more had parents who had completed only some secondary school.

Greater numbers, compared to non-Indigenous students, lived in single-parent families or with a parent and a guardian. Fewer Indigenous students than non-Indigenous students had a computer, internet access, a desk or textbooks for study at home. They were more likely to arrive late for school on a regular basis, sometimes missing school for months at a time. While the majority of Indigenous students attended some preschool, fewer of them spent more than one year at preschool.

Student attitudes, engagement, motivation and beliefs

Reading and science appealed significantly less to Indigenous



THERE'S NO DOUBTING THE DISPARITY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS. INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE ACCESS TO TEXTBOOKS, A COMPUTER, AN INTERNET CONNECTION, A DESK OR EVEN A QUIET PLACE IN WHICH TO STUDY.

students than non-Indigenous students, although both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students reported similar levels of interest in and enjoyment of mathematics. Indigenous students also had a significantly lower appreciation of science or desire to study the discipline.

Despite this, they reported putting just as much effort into and persisting in their study as non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students had significantly lower levels of confidence in their ability to effectively handle tasks in mathematics and science as well as in their general studies. They also had lower levels of self-concept in mathematics and science, and reported higher levels of anxiety about studying mathematics. As is often found, males, regardless of Indigenous status, reported significantly higher levels of self-concept in these areas than female students. One important finding, since it's something that can be affected by teachers and schools, is that self-efficacy in mathematics and science were found to have one of the strongest associations with students' performance among Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike.

Students' learning strategies and preferences

There was little difference shown between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in managing their own learning – both groups used memorisation strategies with similar frequency in their studies, particularly when learning mathematics.

The same was found for their use of elaboration strategies, although Indigenous students used them less often when studying mathematics. Indigenous students were less likely to use control strategies in mathematics that involved checking what they had learned and working out what they still needed to learn.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students had similar preferences for competitive learning situations in learning mathematics and for cooperative learning situations in their general studies as well as mathematics.

Learning environments – schools and classrooms

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students had similar attitudes towards school, their relationships with teachers and discipline – a positive finding that indicates Australian schools are succeeding in providing a supportive and welcoming environment to all students.

There were no significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in terms of their sense of belonging at school or in the level of support their teachers showed in English and mathematics classes, although Indigenous females indicated receiving greater support when studying mathematics compared to Indigenous males.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous students reported positive views about discipline in their English classes, although Indigenous students reported significantly fewer disciplinary problems in their mathematics lessons compared to non-Indigenous students.

Putting it all together

Home and family matters put the low academic achievement of Indigenous students into context. Generally, Indigenous people have poorer socioeconomic outcomes than the non-Indigenous population. This inequality is reflected in lower than average levels of household income and high levels of house overcrowding and homelessness.

Indigenous people have less access to the resources they need for study and are more likely to have parents with lower levels of educational experience.

In national tests in the early years of primary schooling, Indigenous students consistently achieve at lower levels than their non-Indigenous peers, but as schooling continues the gaps gradually widen as poor attendance compounds a poor start to school.

Lower achievement and interruptions to school attendance lead to lower levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy, which in turn hold back Indigenous students from academic achievement.

Education is supposed to provide students with opportunities in their lives and it's important that students and their parents understand the impact of their choices.

School systems can and should have a role in furthering this understanding. ■

Sue Thomson, *a principal research fellow in the PISA National Project Manager for Australia.*

Lisa de Bortoli *is a research fellow for the Australian Council for Educational Research in the national and international surveys research program.*

The research reported here is based on their report, 'Contextual factors that influence the achievements of Australia's Indigenous students: Results from PISA 2000-2006.'

LINKS:
www.ozpisa.acer.edu.au

News

National curriculum

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority has invited feedback on its draft national curriculum. ***STEVE HOLDEN*** *reports.*

When the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) released its draft national curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history for national consultation last month, politicians and the media focused on content, but educators were more concerned about the implementation timeline and the need for the development of resources to support teaching.

The consultation period on the draft national curriculum runs until 23 May, with the final curriculum expected to be in Australian schools from 2011.

The second phase of curriculum development for 2011 addresses geography, languages and the arts, with the third phase, on information and communication technology, design and technology, health and physical education, economics, business, and civics and citizenship, yet to be and agreed by education ministers.

The draft curriculum for maths and science shares plenty in common with existing state and curriculum documents. The draft maths curriculum addresses number and algebra, statistics and probability, and measurement and geometry, with 'proficiency strands' addressing understanding, fluency, problem solving and reasoning. The draft science curriculum addresses science understanding and inquiry skills, with 'science as a human endeavour' addressing student engagement and interest in science.

As Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) president Peter Turnbull noted in ASTA's formal response to the science framing paper in February last year, the intent of curriculum documents fails to be realised in practice unless there are significant and appropriate professional learning opportunities for all teachers.

'The teachers must have a deep understanding of the documents before they can effectively use them to inform their practice,' Turnbull wrote in the ASTA response. 'Hence, there must be provision for significant and appropriate professional learning opportunities for teachers of science before the beginning of the implementation phase.'

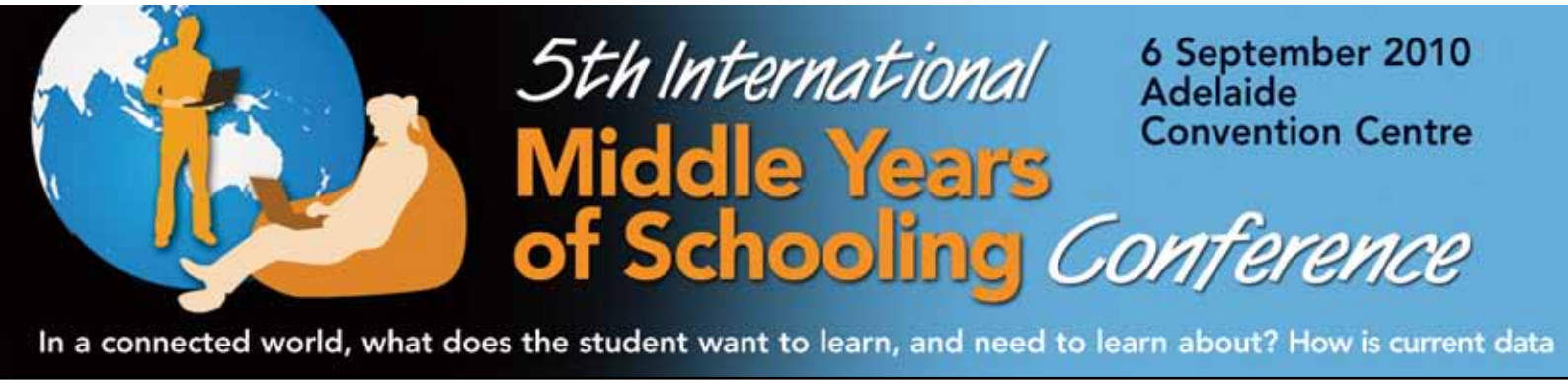
Commonwealth Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard told *AAP*'s Bonny Symons-Brown in March that the Commonwealth expected to harness the existing curriculum support systems provided by each jurisdiction to support the rollout of the national curriculum. That may be easier said than done.

The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) will provide a formal response to ACARA regarding the draft curriculum in late April. Immediate past president Judy Anderson is steering the AAMT's formal response process, since president Peter Sullivan was extensively involved in the development of the draft mathematics curriculum.

In a prepared statement, Anderson observed, 'The development is a staged process and, to date, we only have access to draft content descriptions with elaborations, and achievement standards. In providing feedback on these aspects we will be noting the need for careful development of other aspects, including thinking on the overall curriculum that is appropriate, including and especially the capabilities and cross-curricular components, as well as... coherence with the senior secondary curriculum; work samples; the role of achievement standards etc.'

The AAMT's preliminary concerns include:

- the embedding of the proficiency strands within each of the content strands
- the appropriateness of expectations for each year level
- the appropriateness of Year 7 descriptors for those states in which Year 7 is in the primary school



- the connections and coherence of the development of concepts through the years, and
- the identification of additional content in Year 10 and its impact on students' access to learning options in the senior secondary years.

Predictably, the history and English drafts are more contentious. According to Australian Association for the Teaching of English president Guy Bayly-Jones, 'There is a lack of overall coherence, as the necessary interrelationships between the three discrete strands of language, literature and literacy are not highlighted. This turns English teaching into a reductive exercise of "join the content dot points."' On the positive side, he said English teachers are likely to see the achievement standards as clear and reasonable.

History Teachers' Association of Australia president Paul Kiem described the draft curriculum as 'ambitious.' 'The fact that the...draft will be evaluated in the absence of clear information about implementation does raise quite serious concerns,' he said in a prepared statement. 'We will be evaluating the (Kindergarten to Year 10) document before we have seen proposals for Year 11-12 courses,' he added. The draft curriculum for English, mathematics, history and science for the senior secondary years was scheduled for release this month, for three months of national consultation.

LINKS: Visit the consultation portal that hosts the draft curriculum at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

IN BRIEF

My school

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) chief executive Peter Hill is seeking legal advice on potential copyright infringements by third parties using data from ACARA's My School website. ACARA asked Stephen James to withdraw a report on '8,000 Australian schools ranked from top to bottom' from his Australia School Ranking website, claiming it breached copyright. ACARA's database copyright claim may, however, have been dealt a blow by the judgement in February by Federal Court Judge Michelle Gordon in *Telstra Corporation Limited v Phone Directories Company*. Judge Gordon ruled that Telstra does not own copyright over the information in its *Yellow Pages* and *White Pages* phone directories because they depend on databases for which there is no clear authorship and no originality.

Bullying...

According to results from a Newspoll survey conducted for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, 74 per cent of people were bullied when they were at school; almost one in four have been bullied in the workplace; and 20 per cent of respondents aged between 18 and 24 years have been cyberbullied. In other results from the survey of 1,200 respondents aged 18 years or older, 92 per cent of Australians identify bullying as a serious issue, with 87 per cent saying bullying needs to be better addressed.

...and more on bullying

Justice Tony Cavanough in the Victorian Supreme Court ruled in March that a case involving a student who was bullied by four other children aged younger than 10 years should be reheard. The student had lodged a civil claim for compensation in the Victorian Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal. Her claim had been rejected on the basis that, under Victorian criminal law, children under the age of 10 years are presumed to be too young to commit a criminal offence and are incapable of criminal intent. The law requires proof beyond reasonable doubt that they understand that their actions were wrong.

Justice Cavanough ruled that in this case, since the student had been frequently punched, kicked, pinched, and threatened with scissors and a broken bottle, it was clear that the incidents had not occurred accidently and that the main bully fully intended, by her threats, to put her victim in fear of her life.

Good sports

Queensland's 167 former State of Origin stars are helping Indigenous students in six Queensland state high schools to improve their results off the football field. The Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education program, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, aims to encourage the academic, cultural and sporting achievements of Indigenous secondary school students.

Key Speakers
Prof. Paul Deering (Hawaii)
Dr. Gary Stager (USA)
Prof. Erica McWilliam (QLD)
Dr. Thelma Perso (NT)
Ms. Robyn Barratt (SA)
Ms. Margot Foster (SA)

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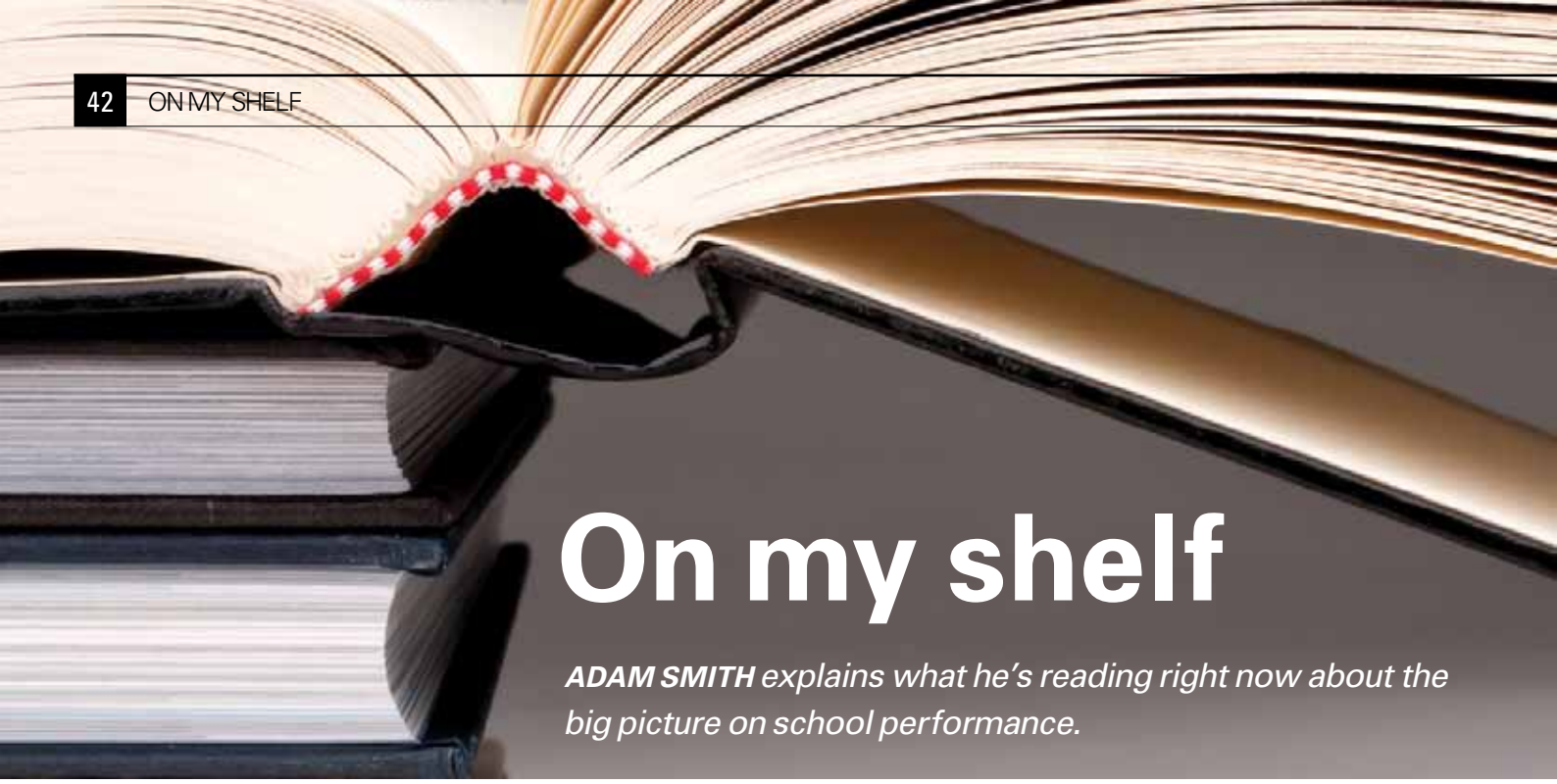
Department of Education and Children's Services

and pedagogical research challenging us? What does it mean to be an educator in the 21st century?



On my shelf

***ADAM SMITH** explains what he's reading right now about the big picture on school performance.*

Sam Chaltain is an American author and educator whose writings have claimed prime position on my book shelf in recent months. Chaltain is National Director of the Forum for Education and Democracy, a Washington DC-based education think tank. In advance of Chaltain's recent visit to Australia, I found myself deeply engaged by the passion and clarity with which he writes on education in general and school performance in particular.

Chaltain's writing is of direct relevance to the ongoing debate in Australia about how we measure and report success in schools. Australian educators have watched as the Commonwealth government attempts to implement its 'Education Revolution,' which includes record investment in digital technologies and school infrastructure, new initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and reward high-quality instruction, and the launch of new mechanisms, most notably the My School website, to measure and track school performance.

On 1 February, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd promised to expand My School to include a national parent survey on bullying and teacher quality, and spoke of providing what he called a more 'rounded view of a school's overall culture.' With reforms that aim to expand and deepen our understanding of school performance, the crucial question is how we define and measure excellence in education. I think the recent government actions are positive signs, but also think there's a long way to go before Australians are given a holistic and balanced picture of school success.

In an opinion piece called 'The big picture on school performance,' Chaltain proposes a broad, flexible new scorecard for assessing school performance. He calls it the ABC of school success and describes five component categories: achievement, balance, climate, democratic practices, and equity. These five universal measurement categories, Chaltain argues, could provide both structure and freedom, allowing individual schools to choose which data points to track under each category.

Achievement should be expanded to incorporate additional factors that are critical to closing the achievement gap and improving student learning. Measures to improve student learning could include assessments that require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve complex real-world problems in mathematics, and defend their ideas orally and in writing; and learning support programs that address individual student needs and ensure that all students succeed.

Balance is a fundamental part of the human condition. Schools should help develop children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged at school. Measures to ensure balance could include the provision of sufficient opportunities for enrichment activities like dance, art and physical education; and the provision of regular opportunities for teachers from different disciplines to communicate with each other, and work together and support each other in their professional practice.

Climate refers to a school's overall culture and learning environment. Greater emphasis should be placed on creating an environment that is healthy and high functioning. This could be measured by using the Comprehensive School Climate

Dr David Sousa returns to Australia for the 2010 Hawker Brownlow Education 'Classroom Strategies that Work' conference. 15-18 May 2010

Based in educational neuroscience, Dr Sousa's work in brain research is internationally acclaimed. Dr Sousa is an entertaining and informative presenter, offering unique insights into the teaching and learning processes. Topics that Dr Sousa will explore during Hawker Brownlow Education's conference include:

Workshop topics covered:

- How the Brain Learns
- The Leadership Brain
- How the Brain Influences Behaviour
- How the Special Needs Brain Learns
- Helping Students Become Better Readers
- How the Gifted Brain Learns

For more details about conference registration visit our website at www.hbe.com.au

Inventory, a research-based needs assessment that provides immediate feedback on how students, parents and school personnel perceive their school's overall environment for learning.

Democratic practices will help create an environment where people feel both empowered and protected. We should take stock of how effectively schools equip young people with the understanding, motivation and skills they need to become active and visible contributors to the common good. Schools should measure the extent to which administrators establish and maintain structures and meaningful roles that involve students, parents, staff and community members in decision-making; and the extent to which students are routinely encouraged throughout the curriculum to agree, and disagree, honestly and respectfully.

Equity is vital if we're to reduce the predictive value that sociocultural and economic characteristics have on student achievement. This should be measured by tracking the extent to which the aspirations, strengths and weaknesses of each student are known by at least one member of the school staff; and by the extent to which the school actively collaborates with its students' families as partners in the students' education.

Measuring schools using Chaltain's ABC, and supporting them to make progress across all five categories, will bring us closer to the holistic picture of school achievement that the Commonwealth government appears to be striving for.

While common sense dictates that a holistic picture would also necessarily include the views of students themselves, the voice of young people is all too often left out of the education debate.

This is why the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development launched Tell Us. Beginning in February and running until the end of April, it's a campaign to enable Australia's secondary school students to share their views with decision makers on what success means to them, and the ways in which they'd like to be measured.

The Prime Minister says he wants to expand the information available on the new My School website and I commend the government's commitment to providing a broader view of a school's overall culture. What's still missing from this picture, though, is the voice of students themselves – which is why the Tell Us survey is so important.

Tell Us aligns with the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the national agreement to improve outcomes for students in all Australian schooling by promoting equity and excellence to enable all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Currently, our education system assesses successful learning through the rigorous measures of literacy and numeracy. While important, these alone cannot capture or encourage the range of learning that is needed to prepare children for the real-life application of knowledge.

Already, student responses to Tell Us indicate that while traditional academic assessments contribute to their feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction at school, a broader assessment agenda, akin to Chaltain's ABC framework, is their preferred way to go.

The Tell Us initiative, like Chaltain's ABC scorecard, isn't a radical proposal for our education systems; it's actually a logical extension of government policy, and represents a progressive movement towards a more balanced scorecard of achievement, one that incorporates the views and aspirations of students for the first time. ■

Adam Smith *is the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Young Australians.*

LINKS

Visit Tell Us at www.tellus.org.au

For more on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory, visit www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php

For more on the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, visit www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

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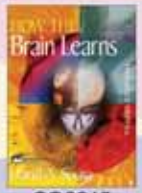
Chaltain, S. (2010). The big picture on school performance. The Huffington Post. Available at www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-chaltain/the-big-picture-on-school_b_446865.html

Dr David Sousa resources available from.....



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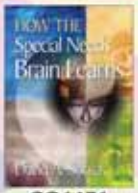

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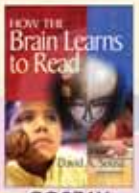

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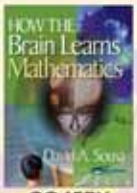

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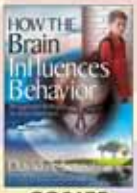

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Back to 1969

A Guide to Australia's Top Private Schools and Colleges – *it's a fascinating op-shop find and it takes* ***WENDY HARMER*** *back to 1969.*

'Miss Patman already has a reputation with the girls as a bit of a swinger, mainly because she was seen wearing a Mozart bow instead of a hat to church! An attractive woman in her late-30s with platinum-white hair, she is a fluent conversationalist. On one wall of her attractive apartment hang two of her works – abstracts in mulberry toning which match the linen-covered suite.'

A friend unearthed a truly fabulous treasure from an op-shop recently. Printed by the *Australian*, it's a *A Guide to Australia's Top Private Schools and Colleges. 1969*. Some 60 elite institutions are profiled and, 40 years on, it's a fascinating document.

This was a time when school principals were at the centre of a personality cult. They were free of the onerous tasks of endless consultation with the school, the wider community and the education department. They didn't have to tolerate student-led activities, mollify parents, have dialogue with religious leaders or field media inquiries.

The headmasters and mistresses ran their own show and, in this book, speak with an honesty that's astonishing to the modern-day reader. Wouldn't most principals, in their hearts, love to go back to an era where they might be described as 'a young, athletic-looking and very much alive six-footer looking a good deal less than his 38 years'?

Consider the comments from Miss Betty Archdale, 61, then headmistress of Abbotsleigh, Sydney, and regarded by the girls as 'utterly fab, swinging, top drawer.'

'I'll talk to the girls about love, sex, abortion, Vietnam, religion. I'm a virgin and I'm proud of it,' says Betty. Whoops!

'A lot of the girls live a very gay social life indeed. A few of the girls run wild, but we ease them out. Of course a certain amount of stealing goes on at the school.' Alert the media!

My father was a state school headmaster and principal for 33 years in country Victoria. Always perfectly groomed, he was either the secretary or treasurer for the town's sports clubs, and enjoyed great respect in the community.

'I was like a god,' he says, laughing. 'The parents and students were terrified of me. My standing as headmaster meant I was regarded as the High Court of All Things, although there was often some meat-worker who'd take a swing at you down the pub.' Gone are those times, along with the country pubs and abattoirs.

Dad rues the time in the 1980s when parents and various community stalwarts were given a say in how he ran his fiefdom. 'Up until then, I'd made my educational decisions based on belief and experience,' he says. 'All of a sudden I couldn't do anything without being harassed and undermined. Being a principal these days would be one of the worst jobs you could have.'

Back in 1969, at Woodlands School, Adelaide, Miss Thenie Baddams 'is a square sort of women – although her reputation is far from square.' Thenie doesn't believe in examinations. 'If the teachers are really good, they can make the girls want to learn without exams,' she explains. This was, luckily, around the time when Julia Gillard was still in primary school.

At Scotch College in Adelaide, headmaster Mr Charles Fisher says, 'We are probably one of only a few schools in the world to have our own group of islands. I discovered them some time ago and we recently moved in.'

At Ravenswood in Sydney, Miss Phyllis Evans admits that she's become somewhat shy of the press following the 'barbecue incident,' which produced some 'lively reporting.'

'The barbecue, a gay, end-of-term-show, was allegedly penetrated by liquor and gatecrashers. Miss Evans can laugh about it now, but…' – but, these days, Phyllis would probably have battled a media firestorm, resigned and moved on to become a marriage celebrant.

At Wesley College in Melbourne, Dr Thomas Coates is 'approachable, though firm.' 'You never cane a boy for a real sin, only for a misdemeanour like impertinence.' I honestly didn't know they still had corporal punishment at Wesley in the '60s.

Mr Basil Travers, the head of Shore, Sydney, is a 'rather rugged looking former Rhodes Scholar. Nicknamed "Gyker" – no one seems to know why – he is a firm believer in private schools. Mr Travers said that the council, with some foresight, originally bought up a large tract of land, but that space was beginning to be a problem.'

In 2009 Shore stumped up $35 million to buy the historic Graythwaite property in the face of fierce community opposition. It seems that some things never change. ■

Wendy Harmer *is one of Australia's best known humourists and authors, and a regular columnist for* Inside Teaching.

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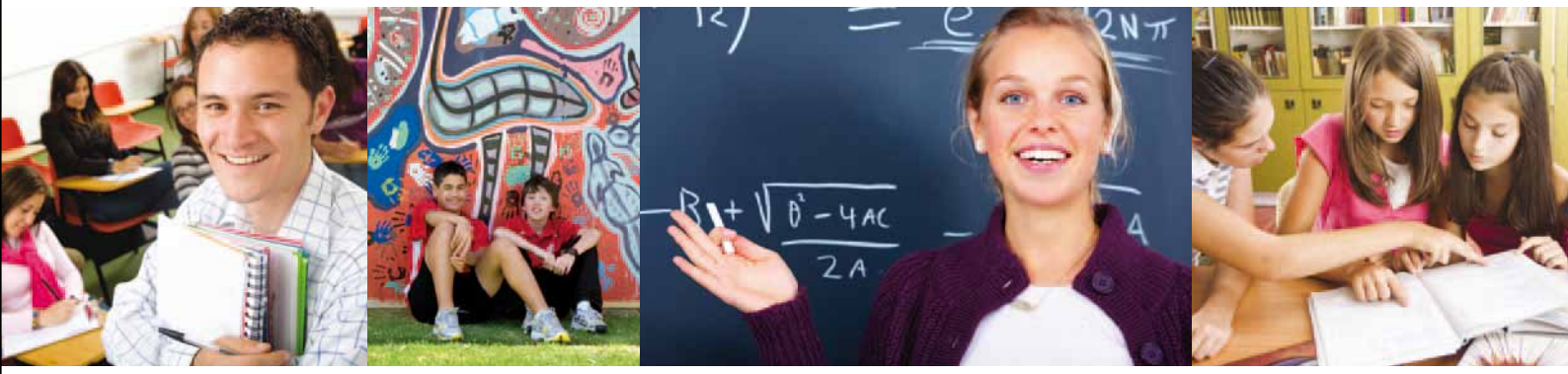
Improving Learning



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Reviews

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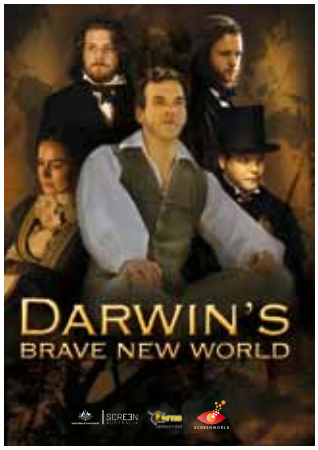

Darwin's Brave New World

Written by Katherine Thomson

Directed by Lisa Matthews & Jason Bourque

Produced by ScreenWorld & Ferns Productions

$109 primary; $179 secondary

Reviewed by Michael Daniel

Darwin's Brave New World explores Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the seminal work on the theory of evolution on the basis of natural selection. Its publication marked a watershed in scientific thought about the origins of life.

The documentary takes us on Darwin's life from the voyage of the Beagle – the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand and Australia, all places that had a significant impact on the genesis of his theory of natural selection – and on to the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and its aftermath.

The documentary then explores the ways in which Darwin developed his theory over the next quarter of a century. Contrary to popular opinion, Darwin did work with reference to other scientists. Rival research by Alfred Wallace, which had produced similar findings, made publication imperative. Far from being a rival, Wallace supported Darwin.

Part of Darwin's challenge, though, was that he had to be circumspect about his research in order to be accepted by the scientific establishment. Given the close alignment in England between the academy and the Anglican Church, Darwin risked being undermined and rejected by his scientific colleagues, as his ideas would have been considered too dangerous if they had been considered to undermine the veracity of the Bible.

Darwin's treatment of the origins of humans was extremely circumspect. While he dealt with it in passing only at the end of the work, it was this aspect of the work, ironically, that became the most controversial.

Darwin's Brave New World, as a documentary, is extremely well produced and well researched – it's based on Professor Iain McCalman's book, *Darwin's Brave New World.* Sets and costumes are accurate, it's well acted and the commentary is augmented by the insightful observations of various scholars. There's also a useful study guide that provides a good list of useful websites and carefully-considered learning activities.

Most adults and some adolescents would find this program engaging, but it's hard to see how the whole series could be used either in a science or a history classroom, unless a detailed study were made by a class – one that allowed for the three 54-minute episodes as well as the learning activities based on the content. Judiciously chosen excerpts would, however, be a useful resource, not only in a science or history classroom, but even in disciplines such as religious studies.

Michael E Daniel is a teacher at Camberwell Grammar School, Melbourne.

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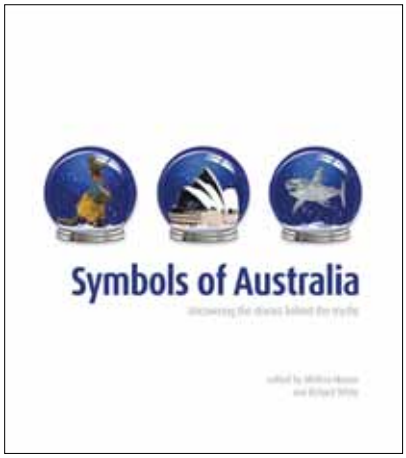


Symbols of Australia

Edited by Melissa Harper & Richard White

Published by UNSW Press & National Museum of Australia Press

ISBN 9 781921 410 505

RRP $39.95

Reviewed by Steve Holden

I read *Symbols of Australia: Uncovering the stories behind the myths* just after Federal Court Justice Peter Jacobson ruled in favour of Larrikin Music in a copyright infringement case, *Larrikin Music Publishing v EMI Songs Australia*. Larrikin took legal action after ABCTV *Spicks and Specks* quiz-show host Adam Hills in 2007 asked contestants to identify the flute riff in 'Down Under.' Jay Laga'aia got the answer: 'Kookaburra.' See, all that work on *Play School* paid off.

Larrikin Music bought the rights to 'Kookaburra,' written in 1934 by Marion Sinclair, a music teacher at Toorak College, Melbourne, following her death in 1988.

Most legal pundits thought Larrikin's copyright infringement claim would flop, but Justice Jacobson ruled that 'Down Under' infringed Larrikin's copyright in 'Kookaburra' and that Larrikin was entitled to recover damages.

It's a nice example of the way symbols are accepted and contested in our lives. As the editors of *Symbols of Australia*, Melissa Harper and Richard White, explain, symbols of Australia – like the

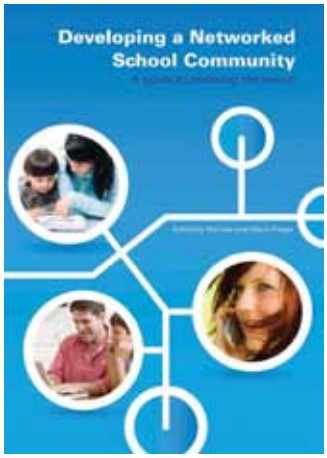
kangaroo, say, or the Sydney Opera House – are readily recognisable and readily reproducible. Recognisability and reproducibility were both central to the Larrikin copyright infringement case, never mind the fact that any number of kids have reproduced their own version, 'Kookaburra sits on electric wire, jumping up and down with his pants on fire,' in schoolyards over the years.

Symbols of Australia should prove to be of great use for teachers of Australian history or society and the environment, but also for teachers of English addressing symbolism, culture and the raft of issues that attach to the ambiguous and contested meanings of symbols ranging from the Southern Cross to the baggy green, cap, that is. It illustrates some fine primary sources, like the Eureka flag.

I like the way *Symbols of Australia* investigates symbols like the gum tree, the billy – as in billy tea – and Vegemite, which got its name, I didn't know, in a nationwide competition. That goes part way to explaining the iSnack 2.0 naming disaster.

There are some other surprises: I didn't know the official status of the current Australian flag dates only to 1954; but I did wonder why Australia House was included when the nation's various national, state and territory war memorials were omitted. The sacred fire protest in Melbourne's Kings Domain in 2006, a stone's throw from the Shrine of Remembrance, would've offered an obvious case study in the use of contested symbols for political purposes.

I especially like the analyses of the coat of arms and the flag that show some of the ways in which symbols are contested, which gets us back to kookaburras in the land down under. I wonder whether Kraft will take issue with the 'Down Under' reference to Vegemite, registered as a trademark in 1922. 'She just smiled and gave me an iSnack 2.0 sandwich'? I don't think so.



Developing a Networked School Community: A guide to realising the vision

Edited by Mal Lee and Glenn Finger

Published by ACER Press

ISBN 9 780 864 319 814

RRP $69.95

Reviewed by Ria Hanewald

Developing a Networked School Community investigates the value of networks for 21-century educational settings. Mal Lee, Glenn Finger and their contributing authors explain the concept of a networked school community, what it is, how it works and how it can be used to provide teaching and learning in ways that are relevant and engaging.

The book examines the potential form of the networked school community, and the new challenges and risks, but also the opportunities for improved learning and teaching. They highlight the developments in technologies that increase the capacity of schools for home-school partnerships and provide greater accountability for learning by using digital technologies, while arguing that building and sustaining a strong connection between the home and school is fundamental to young people's learning. Lee, Finger and their contributing authors recognise that the challenges of networked schools are not technological but human, and that it's the willingness or otherwise of people that will enable or block the development of networked learning communities.

Developing a Networked School Community appears to be premised on some assumption that might be questionable. Not all students share middle-class values, enjoy middle-class standards of living, or use digital technologies ubiquitously as part of their personal and home lives. Large numbers of children and families are already under-represented in online participation because of parental unemployment; non-English speaking backgrounds; accident, trauma or chronic illness; alcohol or substance abuse; addictions or gambling problems; homelessness and so on. Some families don't have the capacity to select, purchase, set up and maintain various digital devices in the home.

It could be argued that disadvantaged people lack the resources to provide generally favourable home conditions and that there's a very real risk that the creation of digitally-enabled networks of schools, families and communities might actually perpetuate and deepen the digital divide between home and school, thus contributing to the further disenfranchising of disadvantaged students.

Nevertheless, the book will appeal to teachers, school administrators, educational leaders and families interested in understanding networked learning communities and the possibilities they hold. The team of authors provides fresh insights on the theme and argue that networked school communities build and sustain a strong connection between the home and school, which they see as fundamental to young people's learning.

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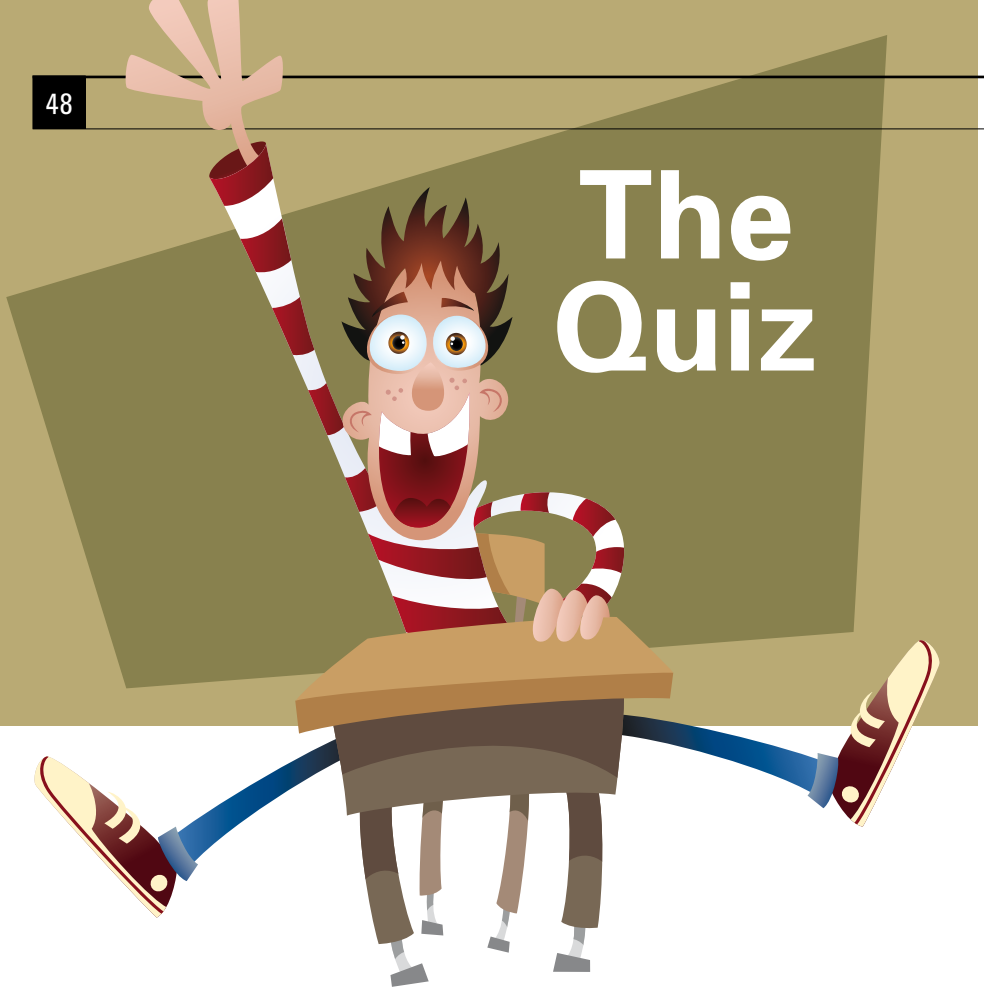
The Quiz



1 Paul Gray and Christian Thompson will be the first Indigenous Australians to attend which university?

2 Gray and Thompson are the recipients of the scholarship named for which Indigenous activist and public servant?

3 Name three of the brands most commonly recognised by Brisbane preschoolers, according to research conducted by Professor Bettina Cornwell and Dr Anna McAlister, working at the University of Queensland.

4 Approximately how many students took part in the national Ride2School day in March this year: 50,000, 100,000 or 500,000?

5 Approximately what percentage of university students seriously consider leaving their institutions before graduation, according to the 2009 results of the Australian Survey of Student Engagement conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research: 20 per cent, 30 per cent or 50 per cent?

6 Which national body, which came into being on January 1, 2010, is responsible for the profession of teaching, teacher education standards and school leadership?

7 Which author and psychologist, and originator of the term 'lateral thinking,' recently called on Education Minister Julia Gillard to include thinking on the national school curriculum?

8 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), what percentage of the 3,484,700 students enrolled in 2009 attended government schools?

9 Has this percentage increased or decreased since 1999?

10 According to the ABS, what percentage of Indigenous students is retained from Year 7 to Year 12: 22 per cent, 45 per cent or 77 per cent?

11 What percentage of non-Indigenous students is retained: 22 per cent, 45 per cent or 77 per cent?

12 According to the Group of Eight's *Review of Education in Mathematics, Data Science and Quantitative Disciplines* released in March, what proportion of Australian junior secondary students enjoys studying maths: a third, a half, or almost all?

13 Internationally, on average, approximately what proportion of junior secondary students enjoys studying maths: a third, a half, or almost all?

14 Discussing the report, which mathematician and radio personality suggested on ABC Radio National that one way to reinvigorate general maths courses in schools might be to 'strip back the syllabus by a good 50 per cent and make sure people actually understood what was left'?

15 Which member of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority recently suggested that students should be tested nationally on basic reading and writing skills from as young as five years old?

16 Which member of the National Centre Against Bullying recently suggested that parents should be able to publish bullying 'scorecards' about schools on the My School website?

17 The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia is seeking legal advice to overturn the SA Non-Government Schools Registration Board's ban on including what in the science curriculum?

18 According to Monash University associate professor of education Deborah Corrigan, the draft national science curriculum has taken what out of science?

19 Which politician recently complained that the draft national history curriculum presented an 'unbalanced', 'black-armband' view of history, with an 'over-emphasis on Indigenous culture and history and almost an entire blotting out of our British traditions and British heritage', despite the draft specifically including a study of 'the character of the British Empire, Australia's place in it, links to Empire and the significance of Australia's British heritage'?

20 To whom was the education blog 'Grog's Gamut' referring with the comment '(He) has counted up the number of times Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander culture is mentioned and based his assessment on that. Perhaps there is a more stupid way to evaluate a document but it escapes me'?

ANSWERS 1. Oxford; 2. Charlie Perkins, who was also the first Indigenous Australian to graduate from university; 3. the top six were, in order, McDonald's, Hot Wheels, Lego, My Little Pony, Coke and Pepsi; 4. 100,000; 5. 30 per cent; 6. the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; 7. Edward de Bono; 8. 66 per cent (see the 'Schools, Australia' results, cat 4221.0, released in March this year); 9. decreased – 70 per cent of students attended government schools in 1999; 10. 45 per cent – up from 35 per cent in 1999; 11. 77 per cent – up from 73 per cent in 1999; 12. a third; 13. about a half (54 per cent); 14. Adam Spencer; 15. Peter Hill; 16. Ken Rigby; 17. intelligent design or creationism; 18. fun; 19. Christopher Pyne; 20. Christopher Pyne.

Diary

1 MAY
Peer Support Program Implementation workshops
Available throughout the year and repeated each month, these workshops help teachers to initiate a whole-school approach to the creation of a positive school culture in primary or secondary schools. Scheduled workshops all states, plus in SA and Victoria by negotiation.

phone 02 9905 3499
email peeroz@peersupport.edu.au
website www.peersupport.edu.au

1-30 MAY
Back to School Month
The Education Foundation Australia's Back to School program now operates across the whole month of May, so you can decide exactly when your former students come Back to School to inspire current students.

phone 03 9650 4277
email backtoschoolday@educationfoundation.org.au
website www.backtoschool.org.au

5 MAY
Excelling in Your First Years of Teaching
For teachers in their first three years, this practical professional learning day hosted by the ACER Institute focuses on giving beginning teachers the tools and skills to successfully navigate the world of teaching. Repeated on 30 August.

place ACER, Melbourne
contact Margaret Taylor
email taylor@acer.edu.au
phone 03 9277 5403
website www.acer.edu.au/1/index.php/seminar/Excelling-in-Your-First-Years-of-Teaching

11-13 MAY
NAPLAN
The National Literacy and Numeracy tests for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in all states and territories.

website www.naplan.edu.au

15-18 MAY
Classroom Strategies that Work: Closing the achievement gap
Hawker Brownlow Education 7th annual thinking and learning conference This conference brings to Australia internationally renowned authors and presenters David Sousa, Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Ruby Payne, Jay McTighe, Gayle Gregory, Jan Chappuis, Patti Drapeau, Lane Clark and Sue Pressler. The conference is highly interactive and is designed for all teachers K-12 and educational leaders.

place Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne
phone 03 8558 2444
email conferences@hbe.com.au
website www.hbe.com.au

21 MAY
Children, Young People and Privacy Conference
Hosted by Privacy Victoria – Office of the Victorian Privacy Commissioner. When does a student have privacy rights? What does the law say about who can know what about students? What can be done to help students thrive in the cyber age, while protecting their personal information? Find out at this event, sponsored by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

place Crown Promenade Hotel, Melbourne
phone 1300 666 444
email youth@privacy.vic.gov.au
website www.privacy.vic.gov.au

24 MAY
Small Schools, Big Issues: the challenges of leading learning in small, rural and remote schools
One quarter of Australian schools have fewer than 2,000 students. Many of these schools are rural, remote or isolated schools. This inaugural national forum will address the unique collection of challenges that face leader in small schools.

place The University Club of Western Australia, Perth
contact Margaret Taylor
email taylor@acer.edu.au
phone 03 9277 5403
website www.acerinstitute.edu.au/smallschools

25-28 MAY
Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference 2010
This biennial conference focuses specifically on technologies designed to advance independent achievement for students with disabilities, complex communication needs or literacy difficulties.

place Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort & Spa, Queensland
contact Eliza Bale
email elizab@spectronicsinoz.com
website www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference

7 JUNE
The 2010 ATOM awards
The awards of the Australian Teachers of Media provide a fantastic opportunity for students to show off their work and be recognised by their peers. Closing date for entries is 7 June.

website www.atomawards.org

7-12 JUNE
Voices on the Coast
Students on Queensland's Sunshine Coast are invited to attend the Voices on the Coast youth literature festival hosted by Immanuel Lutheran College.

place Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim, Queensland
phone 07 5477 3437
email voices@immanuel.qld.edu.au
website www.immanuel.qld.edu.au/voices

6 AUGUST
Jeans for Genes Day
By donating a gold coin on Jeans for Genes Day, your students can support the Children's Medical Research Institute to unravel the mysteries of childhood diseases.

contact Nickie Flambouras
phone 1800 GENIES (436 437)
website www.jeansforgenes.org.au

15-17 AUGUST
Teaching Mathematics? Make it count
The research conference of the Australian Council for Educational Research will focus on mathematics teaching, drawing together research-based knowledge about the effective teaching and learning of mathematics.

place Crown Conference Centre, Melbourne
contact Margaret Taylor
email taylor@acer.edu.au
phone 03 9277 5403
website www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences

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